

This FASCINATING  
RADIO Business



ROBERT J. LANDRY

In the twenty-odd years since World War I radio has developed from a new fad into a major industry. Robert J. Landry, Director of the Division of Progressive Writing of the Columbia Broadcasting System, tells how and why broadcasting has taken its present important place in American lives and gives a comprehensive analysis of how the broadcasting business is organized and operated today.

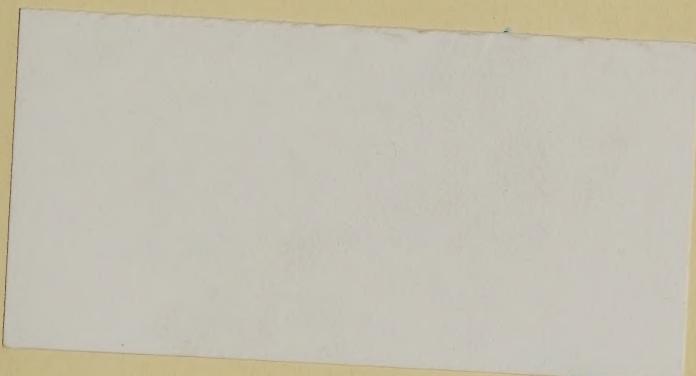
Mr. Landry explains that the early development of radio was conditioned by a mistaken judgment of its function. The American companies controlling patents at first regarded it as a communications business like the telephone and cast about unsuccessfully for a way to charge tolls. But the infant industry stubbornly insisted on becoming an advertising-supported branch of the entertainment business. Realization of this trend brought about shifts of control and led to the formation of RCA and the later competing networks and systems.

There were many growing pains. The broadcasters had to steer between abuses of the public interest such as the nightly fare offered by Doc Brinkley's station in Kansas and the threat of tight federal control. Controversies over copyright and royalties led to an open break in 1941 between the broadcasters and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

New types of program constantly developed. Some, especially in the depression years, grew so popular that the radio became a chief advertising medium and the agencies had to become experts on radio showmanship.

Mr. Landry tells how "special events" broadcasts gave rise to regular salaried representatives and commentators all over the world.

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*Courtesy of the National Broadcasting Company*  
**Radio City by night**

# This Fascinating Radio Business

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BY

ROBERT J. LANDRY

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C O P Y R I G H T , 1 9 4 6 , B Y R O B E R T J . L A N D R Y  
P U B L I S H E D I N T H E U N I T E D S T A T E S

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO  
MY WIFE AND LITERARY ASSISTANT  
MARCIA LANDRY

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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All points of view expressed and the interpretations of fact and attitude given herein are, of course, the author's own unless otherwise indicated.

R. J. L.

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Graham McNamee in an early WEAF sports broadcast. Photo by International Newsreel.



The Happiness Boys of 1923, Ernest Hare and Billy Jones, probably radio's first comedy team. Photo by Foto Topics, Inc.

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## BEFORE RADIO

PRIOR to radio, or "wireless," there were three successive and successful media of telecommunication—telegraphy, cables, telephony. Each of these represented a major and amazing conquest by man of time and distance. Each has created a saga, and a literature, of its own. Each became big business of itself. In this text we recall only a few of the salient facts in order to relate the "wired" to the "wireless" developments.

First a word about historic dates in telecommunications. These are often conventional or convenient or arbitrary but not always unchallenged. New inventions and new industries do not appear full-grown and ready for the market place. Rather they pass through many vicissitudes before reaching maturity and everyday usage. Often, too, claim and counterclaim as between inventors and entrepreneurs must be filtered in litigation. Again and again it has turned out in the history of the several media of telecommunications that an experiment of group "A" failed, only to succeed months or years later when repeated with better technique, financing or luck by group "B." Who, then, is effectively and practically or even morally entitled to the accolade? What price fame and fortune?

Applications for patents in telegraphy were filed in 1837 both in England and America, but this date is less well advertised in the United States than 1844, the year of the experimental wire from Washington to Baltimore, financed by a 30,000-dollar grant from Congress. It was then that Samuel F. B. Morse key-clicked over forty miles of line to his co-worker Alfred Vail the much-quoted pious inquiry, "What hath God wrought?" The case of Morse is arresting as a sampling of the type of grief and travail that many another inventor and promoter were to encounter in connection with forms of telecommunication. Stubborn and self-appreciative,

a painter of some distinction and a professor in art and design, Morse was able to fight through a maze of confusion and frustration to ultimate wealth and prestige. But the way was rutted with opposition. Morse's first interest in telegraphy had been evoked in 1832 when he was returning from Europe. A fellow passenger, Dr. Charles Jackson of Boston, discoursed fascinatingly on electromagnetism. Thereafter Morse was preoccupied with the theme of electrical signaling to the near-exclusion of all else.

Unhappily for Morse, Sir Charles Wheatstone, working with William F. Cooke, had developed a system of telegraphy in England and was to file for a patent in London some months earlier than Morse's own application in Washington. Because of this the British greeted Morse when he arrived there in the summer of 1838 as some sort of Yankee confidence man. His application for an English patent was rejected while Sir Charles Wheatstone then prepared to file for a patent of his own in the United States.

Francis O. J. Smith, a friendly congressman, accompanied Morse on the 1838 trip, which proved to be a series of fiascoes. The French were no more friendly to Morse than had been the British and although Morse secured a patent in Paris it was so swaddled in legal reservations as to be of little value. It was the same in Europe generally and when Morse, alone, finally penetrated into Russia, he encountered the fiercest opposition of all. It appears that Czar Nicholas I, a bilious potentate, conceived a violent abhorrence for both Morse the man, and the whole idea of tapping out messages over electric circuits. The czar seems to have reasoned, and correctly, that improvements in the art of communication would render appreciably more wobbly the institution of Divine Right. He wanted no part of whispering wires and he flatly forbade all Russian periodicals even to describe Morse's mischievous gadget.

On his return to the United States, Morse was fortified in his congenital aversion to "foreigners" and throughout the rest of his life he was a vehement leader of the political nativism of his times, fighting all foreigners, including those who had recently become,

or who wanted to become, American citizens. A suit filed against him by the Boston doctor, Charles Jackson, who asserted copartnership in telegraphy, seems not to have induced Morse to hate all Bostonians.

Cyrus W. Field's troubles with the Atlantic cable were of a different kind. He seems to have been the guest of honor at a series of premature banquets in celebration of a project that was ultimately to work and pay off handsomely but which, meanwhile, failed and failed again. When not busy in London or New York seeking additional financing, Field was at sea grappling on the ocean bed to recover broken cables that had disappeared. Although Queen Victoria and President Buchanan exchanged amenities by cable in 1858, it was actually another ten years before service was even quasi-reliable. But once successfully operated, the volume of intercontinental-message traffic made Field, an American, and his British backers extremely opulent.

The Civil War quickened the tempo of landline telegraphy, the new method of transmitting intelligence profoundly influencing both military operations and the journalistic coverage of battles. It was over the spreading network of telegraph wires that a shocked nation first learned of Abraham Lincoln's assassination by John Wilkes Booth. Then, following the war and the expansion of American industry, cable services and telegraph alike played an important role in an upsurge of both domestic and foreign trade. The modern world was well begun.

The advent of the third wired medium, the speaking telephone, was attended by great expectations and bitter rivalry along with the usual incidence of skepticism and ridicule. The imagination of the world was captured by the drama of the competition for the honor—and the rewards—of being "first." Elisha Gray, founder of Western Electric, and Alexander Graham Bell, paterfamilias of American Telephone & Telegraph, were the rival claimants. Gray arrived at the United States Patent Office in Washington on February 14, 1876, to file a caveat, or notice to the world, of his intention

to produce the speaking telephone. He was two hours behind attorneys representing Bell who had filed Bell's own claim. In the litigation that followed Bell's priority was established.

Of such stuff was the story made up, but it is sufficient to summarize here that during the eighty-three years between landline telegraphy (1837) and radiobroadcasting (1920) there was incessant experimentation going forward all over the world in various and successive forms of electrical signaling. Engaged in these experiments were inventors, physicists, college instructors and students, business promoters, engineers, adventurers, government officials, armies, navies, tinkerers in attics and shops, and a motley crew of enthusiastic amateurs. They were of many nationalities, notably American, British, French, German, Italian, Belgian, Danish, Swedish, Dutch and Canadian. They were financed in many ways: by joint stock companies, export capital, government grants in aid, military appropriations, the private savings of inventors, their families and friends. As it happened, no one inventor, no one country, no one syndicate, no one laboratory ever was able to claim a "system" of telecommunications that was complete, finished, perfected, in need of nothing further. All learned or borrowed or licensed from many others.

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## CHAPTER I

### BIG NEWS IN THE AIR

FOR UPWARDS of fifty years the big news had been foreshadowed. Man would ultimately unlock the secret of electromagnetic waves, harness the force, dominate the ether and produce communication without benefit of wires. Thomas A. Edison had predicted as much and had experimented extensively, if inconclusively, in this area. Edison had noted, as had many another telegrapher at his key, how leakage of electricity from telegraph lines shot off in space to magnetize metallic objects at a distance. Here was an arresting clue to wireless. Scientists of the standing of Sir William Crookes, Edouard Branly, and Sir Oliver Lodge also envisioned the new medium. A German physicist, Heinrich Hertz, did more perhaps than anybody else to get at the basic facts about electromagnetic waves and the nature of the all-permeating ether. Hertz's findings of 1887 definitely gave new direction and momentum to experimentation in wireless signaling. Most significant of all he caused electromagnetic waves to hurtle space at will (a matter of some hundreds of yards at the time) through an arrangement of broken coils, or oscillating circuits separated to form a spark gap. A race now began behind scenes in many a laboratory to transform the Hertzian principles into a commercial commodity.

The break came in 1896 when a half-Italian, half-Irish youth of twenty-two named Guglielmo Marconi hurried to England at the first chance, fearful that he should be too late and that somebody else might establish a claim before him. From adolescence this young man had been fascinated by wireless. It was his good fortune to enjoy the advantages of a friendly professor at the University of Bologna who introduced him to the lore of Hertz, and a sympathetic father who permitted him to experiment endlessly on

the family farm. Now with the eagerness of youth he presented himself to the financial center of the world. There he enjoyed a magical success, all his fears proving groundless. Seldom in fact was ambition so swiftly realized. Marconi not only found himself the first man in all the world to secure a patent in radiotelegraphy, but he was rapidly to become world-famous and the symbolic parent of a great new industry.

It was understood at once that this farm boy from Italy had succeeded where older and more experienced men had failed. Marconi took London as Dick Whittington did not. He was a nineteenth-century Horatio Alger hero who never wore a patch, never shined shoes or delivered papers, never married the merchant prince's lovely daughter. Yesterday a boy, today a man of consequence: that was the sequence with Marconi whose first down payment from his London backers amounted to £15,000 in cash and £60,000 in securities of the brand-new Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company, Ltd. The name of the company was changed in a year or two in order to exploit the mounting fame and prestige of the Italian-Irish youth, and it became Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company, Ltd. The stock was quoted in 1899 at £4½ per share on a par value of £1, although no dividends were paid out until 1911. Actually the company was best known through the years simply as "British Marconi." It provided the inventor-founder with abundant personal wealth which he employed pleasantly during a third of a century when, as an Italian *senatore*, complete with sumptuous private yacht, he was highly regarded as a *bon vivant* and charming host.

In due time Marconi was at home in a dozen lands, the confidant of great nabobs everywhere. But this came about gradually. In the first few years following the granting of his patent he continued to experiment, especially interesting himself in atmospheric and other obstacles to the full utilization of space telegraphy. He was watched at this period with incisive interest by the navies of the world, the cable services and the inventors of rival wireless

systems which presently materialized in France, Germany and the United States.

The concern of the navies was fairly obvious. Wireless would release naval vessels from their age-old reliance upon homing pigeons in ship-to-shore communication. Naval tactics would be revolutionized. Marconi demonstrated his system to the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean during 1897, and two years later at the invitation of the United States Navy he personally supervised an exchange of messages across thirty-six miles of Atlantic waters between the American battleships *Massachusetts* and *New York*.

Meanwhile, the concern of the cable companies had the immediacy of a pocketbook anxiety. Radiotelegraphy might well break their monopoly of continent-to-continent speed communication. When Marconi set up shop in Newfoundland during 1901 in a first attempt to achieve an overocean signal to England he provoked a peevish warning from the Anglo-American Cable Company. He was told, in effect, that Newfoundland was cabledom's private colony and that he was "trespassing." Marconi was obliged to transfer his experiments to Nova Scotia.

Rival inventors realized that Marconi had the jump on all of them but it was entirely possible that his contemporaries could catch up in the race. Within four or five years of the Marconi patent of 1896 business and national rivalries were already intense. The situation was obscured not only in aggressions and counter-aggressions, but in ultimate values. Who was really in the best position as to ways and means and know-how? Judgment was clouded by partisan and patriotic claims. The Germans were especially piqued at their competitive inferiority, the more so because their own Hertz had, by common consent, cleared the way for practical radiotelegraphy. They accused the British of fostering a global monopoly in the new medium and pointed to the rather hasty incorporation of an American Marconi Company in the state of New Jersey during 1899 as part of a British "conspiracy." The German resentment flared openly in 1903 when the first confer-

ence to formulate international radiotelegraphic standards was convened in Berlin. The Germans had become increasingly aware that despite their success in equipping ships with their Slaby-Arco system, they were at a grievous disadvantage in not possessing adequate shore stations, without whose services the ships, in certain circumstances, might as well not have had any wireless paraphernalia at all. The proposal of an agreement whereby all wireless systems would freely exchange and pass on, reciprocally, one another's messages was scorned by the British as one-sided, unbusinesslike and an attempt by the Germans to strong-arm themselves into an unearned commercial equality at the expense of British property rights and British enterprise.

This standpat attitude was perhaps natural if the discussion had been conducted purely on legalistic and financial levels. Nor can these issues be divorced from the context of power politics and jockeying for commercial advantage circa 1903. But radiotelegraphy was destined to become indispensable to safety at sea. Human life was at stake in the policies debated with such bad temper in Berlin. Considerations of compassion had from ancient times given a special sacrosanctity to the call of distress. In the light of modern conscience it was unthinkable that out of economic rivalry shore stations affiliated with one particular system of communication should remain disinterested in disaster, the branded "enemies" of all ships radio-equipped with the apparatus of a rival communication system.

Here for the first time the question of public interest entered the commercial calculations of a wireless medium. Again and again in infinite variation the challenge would arise, not alone in terms of monopoly but also in terms of anarchy. On the whole, anarchy probably was a more dangerous enemy of public interest than monopoly.

British Marconi's insistence upon its own way of doing business was at the cost of the United States Navy's good will. The London corporation refused to sell equipment outright but demanded in-

stead a lease-with-royalty contract. Angered at these terms, the American Navy (1903) turned for the time being to the German Slaby-Arco system. More important: British Marconi was to pay a high price in years to come for its refusal to establish friendly relations with the American Navy.

In 1904 came the Russo-Japanese war, that weird contest of two corrupt empires, the one inefficient and on the toboggan, the other slick and on the make. The battleships of many nations rode at anchor in those troubled Asiatic waters while the war proper raged in the background. Each navy was there to protect its own national self-interest and each, for the first time in the presence of hostilities, was equipped with wireless.

By a curiously roundabout course the American inventor, Lee De Forest, came to play a part in the radio side of this war. The year before, De Forest had been "discovered" by Sir Thomas Lipton, the famous British tea merchant and yachtsman. The jovial sportsman undertook to "sell" him to British capitalists. Lipton's enthusiasm was impassively received in "The City," where the money was down on Marconi and nothing came of it. However De Forest made a contact with the London *Times* and was encouraged by that enterprising periodical to design and construct a wireless station in China to supply news of a war which the newspaper, uncannily well informed, regarded as inevitable. Two De Forest engineers proceeded to the Orient and established a radio-telegraphic station near Weihaiwei in China. This became the home base of a small steamer which carried reporters on the prowl for news. The steamer was equipped to signal back to the land station which then relayed to a cable point.

On one particular occasion the newspaper boat was halted by a meaningful shot across the bow. A Russian warship revealed an intention of going aboard to interrogate the passengers, perhaps not realizing they represented *THE Times*. Immediately the shore station was signaled and presently a reply came back to the effect that the British Navy was en route to investigate this unauthorized

interviewing. No sooner did the eavesdropping Russian wireless operator rush this information to his commander than the whole project was dropped and the Russian vessel made haste to vanish over the horizon.

Here was radio melodrama on the high seas. Here were cry, response and panic all stemming from a new means of nearly instantaneous communication over considerable distances. The *cognoscenti* wondered what next.

What next indeed! On Christmas Eve of 1906, from his experimental station at Brant Rock, Massachusetts, the brilliant Canadian, Reginald A. Fessenden, startled commercial and amateur operators in his immediate zone by sending forth not the usual electrical pulsations of the Morse code, but the actual sound of the human voice and of musical instruments. Next was radiotelephony.

Lee De Forest interested himself in voice transmissions, too. He planned his radiotelephonic demonstrations with showmanship, going to Paris in 1908 to arrange a voice-cast from the famous Eiffel Tower. Why the Eiffel Tower? Why not the Flatiron Building in Madison Square? Why not the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor? The answer seems plain. De Forest presumably knew that it would be more dramatic from Paris. Again early in 1910 De Forest did the spectacular thing when he rigged a voice-cast with the famous Metropolitan Opera tenor, Enrico Caruso. The best evidence of earwitnesses suggests that this Caruso event was a "voice" transmission more in intention than fact. Static and not Caruso's voice was pear-shaped that evening.

On the whole the public paid not too much attention to either Fessenden's or De Forest's radiotelephony. No ordinary person in ordinary circumstances ever encountered actual proof. It was not a matter of skepticism but a failure of the earth-bound imagination to comprehend the idea. Voices in the sky were hardly more conceivable than daily existence in Outer Mongolia.

More comprehensible were the bickerings of the various in-

ventors and entrepreneurs. It made sense when Fessenden and De Forest or De Forest and Armstrong went to court over patent rights. It was news when a scandal in British Marconi stock brought forth crimson-making questions in Parliament and high officials were accused of low cunning in buying opportunely and selling cleverly.

At this period, as ever since, wireless developments were carried on against a background of unseen myriads of enthusiastic amateur operators. The "hams" (as they called themselves) filled the bleachers of radio and screamed approval or disapproval. Many of the hams, especially in the earlier days, acquired such intimacy with the medium that in the labor market of that time they could slip easily into the employ of radio companies. The owner of many a broadcasting station today was a ham in his teens.

The amateurs have been deservedly praised as a body for their dedicated seriousness. Their work in times of crisis has often been of the highest possible social usefulness. Witness the devotion during floods and other catastrophes of nature. Unfortunately, as an offset, the smart aleck has often flourished among them. Ethical idiots have not realized that the false alarm is never amusing, that obscenity on the air, like chalk writing on sidewalks, is evidence of infantilism. Perhaps the worst offense of the hams in the early years was not willful mischief, however, but egocentric preoccupation with their own experiments. Idle "gossiping" in Morse code hampered the navies, commercial senders and shipping generally for years. The classic instance of amateur nuisance-menace occurred in 1912 when the *Titanic* came to grief in mid-Atlantic. Iceberg warnings before the tragedy and rescue appeals afterward were both impeded by gabby hams who refused to yield the air. Not that the whole blame was put upon amateur operators. Investigation revealed a stupid maritime economy. When a ship's wireless operator went off watch, there usually being no relief operator, the wireless equipment shut down. Hence the bitter irony of vessels quite close to the *Titanic* failing to respond to the

frantic SOS, while most of the rescues were finally effected by ships originally far from the scene.

The failure of Marconi's new miracle medium to "save" the *Titanic* or a majority of its wealthy and celebrated passengers shocked the world into a more realistic and less romantic attitude toward the problems of getting maximum social value out of wireless. Britain strengthened its radiotelegraphy regulations. So did the United States, Congress by the Act of 1912 vesting control of licenses in the Department of Commerce. There was a double impact to the *Titanic* incident when it was coupled with the scandal in British Marconi stock. Here was the seamy side of the bright fabric of creative enterprise. Hereafter it would be necessary for the parties at interest to lift their sights. Until then wireless had been discussed pretty much in terms of investment, costs, financial hazards and prospective profits. The very appeal of radiotelegraphy to many a financier had been in the supposed economy of the medium. Wireless meant just that—no wires to string across vast reaches of open country or along the ocean's bed. There needed to be only a few scattered sending-receiving stations at quite widely separated points and some of the points could be mobile, as in the case of ships. Then came the case of the particular ship, the *Titanic*.

There was radio business news aplenty at this period. One pioneer inventor was actually arrested on a charge of using the mails to defraud. He was duly acquitted but not without the customary embarrassments of a dubious press. But the big sensation was the sudden fiasco of the United Wireless Company, until then the dominant organization in American radiotelegraphy. This firm went into court and pleaded guilty to infringement of Marconi patents. It then collapsed into bankruptcy and its assets were bought in by British Marconi and turned over to American Marconi which was refinanced at the time. The United Wireless blowup was followed not long afterward by the demise, also in bankruptcy but for a totally different reason, of the National

Electric Signalling Company. The inventor, Reginald A. Fessenden, seemed for a time about to come to financial glory through a triangular British-Canadian-American deal but instead he quit the company and sued it for damages. The jury gave him a verdict of \$400,000 and National Electric Signalling disappeared down the drain of insolvency.

American Marconi was now starkly big business in its own right with some sixty-five sending stations on both coasts and on the Great Lakes plus hundreds of contracts with cargo and passenger vessels. It had a high-powered transmitter in Hawaii. The firm's British "parentage" proved somewhat embarrassing, however, now that purely native competition no longer flourished. This embarrassment grew more acute when World War I broke out in August of 1914. The British, as an act of blockade, cut the German cable. The United States meantime was neutral and anxious above all to maintain regular communication with Berlin. Hence the paradox of American Marconi in co-operation with the United States Navy planning and operating superpowered radio transmitters at New Brunswick, New Jersey, designed to surmount the British blockade.

The New Brunswick plant was equipped with the so-called Alexanderson Alternator, named for its inventor, a Swede employed by the General Electric Company of Schenectady. This was a massive contrivance which generated the drive and sensitivity to get messages over great distances. The Alexanderson Alternator was more than a great technical tool. It was, in its day, a political trump card held by America and remained a commercial asset of great moment until 1923 when tube-type transmission supplanted it.

Marconi himself had visited Schenectady in 1915 to inspect the Alexanderson Alternator and negotiations were then begun for British Marconi to secure either exclusive or semiexclusive rights, whichever General Electric was willing to sell, to the alternators, which cost about \$125,000 each to construct and set up for use.

The war prevented consummation of this deal but meanwhile the interest of the United States Navy in alternators was a dominant factor. After Congress declared war on the Central Powers in April of 1917, New Brunswick became a main instrument, under Navy control, of America's own propaganda.

The Wilson administration took two drastic steps with regard to communications. First, all commercial senders were ordered under government operation for the duration. Second, all amateur radio operators were ordered not only to go off the air under penalty of imprisonment, but actually to dismantle and store their equipment during the period of the ban.

The electrical manufacturing companies, especially General Electric of Schenectady and Westinghouse of Pittsburgh, became immersed in radio design and construction of all kinds under the impetus of Army and Navy orders. Similarly Western Electric, the manufacturing arm of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company, was active as never before. Telecommunications loomed large not only in fighting modern battles involving tanks and airplanes but in psychological warfare aimed behind the lines at the home fronts. Thousands of radio technicians were trained by the Signal Corps and the Navy.

Some curious lessons in both defensive and offensive use of wireless were learned. The British Navy with inspired common sense maintained radio silence except when dire necessity required signaling. They devoted their energies to tuning in on the German Navy which poured forth naval orders continuously in the paretic delusion that these were protected by code and cipher.

With all this radio activity, this quickening of interest, this opening up of new perspectives, who shall say at what point during the war it occurred to certain American businessmen that, *post bellum*, it would be nice to get into the radio industry in a rather prominent way? The record is vague as to conception and germination but we may fairly assume, because of the prominence the war gave radio, that the matter was under attention. The

electrical manufacturing companies certainly must have had a realistic appreciation of their own contributions to radio and would favor guaranteed markets for their products. Bigness begets bigness and time ripens the fruit for gathering. More and more talk began to be heard about the future of American Marconi.

American Marconi was staffed by executives whose loyalty and American citizenship were never questioned by the Navy, the branch of the United States Government which exercised jurisdiction over wireless. Nonetheless there was a movement that favored what was called the "complete Americanization" of the company. This movement derived virility and spiritual benediction from a considerable body of naval personnel who were frankly biased against British Marconi. The Navy had neither forgotten nor forgiven the 1902 refusal to sell it British Marconi equipment.

The future of American Marconi was undecided when President Wilson went off to the peace conference in Paris. Rumor was strong however that the company would be "taken over" although how or by whom was obscure. There were apparently two viewpoints symbolized by, respectively, Owen D. Young and Josephus Daniels. Young was a Boston corporation lawyer specializing in public utilities practice who had become general counsel of General Electric in 1913. Daniels was the Secretary of the Navy. Young was the brains behind the "big business" plan with regard to American Marconi. Daniels was the advocate of the "public ownership" thesis. He wished the Federal Government to stay in possession. In this he was singularly unacquainted with the mood of Congress which in July of 1919 flatly ordered the executive branch of the government to restore all telecommunications to private management.

The deal was apparently shaping up rapidly behind scenes throughout 1919. A highly significant visit to Owen D. Young in Schenectady was made in April by Admiral W. H. G. Bullard, Director of the United States Naval Communications Bureau. The admiral had rushed back from Paris after conferring with

President Wilson and he implied or stated (according to the source used) that the President had heard that the 1915 deal to give British Marconi the Alexanderson Alternator was being revived and he wanted it stopped. Whether the admiral was acting in whole or in part on his own initiative (a moot question ever since), his whole emphasis fitted in with the "Americanization" theme as regards the American Marconi company. If General Electric was not to sell its Alexanderson Alternators at \$125,000 each to British Marconi, then what benefits could it anticipate in compensation?

President Wilson was known to have a soft spot for radio. This was commonly attributed to his relish in discovering how the American Marconi station in New Brunswick, with its Alexanderson Alternators, had succeeded in disseminating knowledge of his celebrated Fourteen Points to Mittel-europa. An imaginative statesman like Wilson would be certain to appreciate a medium that could pass intelligence across international boundaries (and oceans) and literally over the heads of enemy censors.

It should not be forgotten that World War I ended on a sour note of disillusionment, and that from having overlavished praise upon our late allies, Britain and France, we rapidly changed gait and proceeded to become equally excessive in our faultfinding. Perhaps it was no coincidence that so much was heard just then of British control of fifty-one percent of the world's cable services to our American twenty-six percent. Questions were asked also about the Monroe Doctrine. Was Britain, meaning British Marconi, to invade South America while we did nothing?

Admiral Bullard's visit in April 1919 was followed in May by General Electric's refusal to sell the Alexanderson Alternator to British Marconi. America would retain for itself this highly important machine which made possible pin-point sensitivity in tuning. The significance of this rejection was, it may be assumed, fully comprehended in London. The Americans were preparing to take over. Two shrewd Yankee traders presented themselves

during June. They were, respectively, the general manager of American Marconi itself, Edward J. Nally, and the General Electric patent expert, Albert G. Davis. They informed the London parties at interest that the time had come. In effect: "Gentlemen, you own 364,826 shares of stock in American Marconi. What will you take for them?"

London was not in a position, and London knew it, to elect not to sell at all. The problem was simply one of making the best possible deal. The gold braid of the United States Navy looked over the shoulders of Messrs. Nally and Davis and smirked at the British, "Remember 1902!"

It was a singularly awkward situation for British Marconi. The climate of American public opinion was plainly critical. The eagle had its wings spread wide indeed just then. Coupled with postwar disenchantment was the deepening nightmare of war debts. That there were accumulated Yankee irritations with the recent friendly ally was evident. No matter that these may have been partly or even largely artificial in their stimulation. It added up to greasing the ways for British Marconi's not too ceremonious exit from the domination of American wireless. The head of American Marconi, John W. Griggs, a onetime United States Attorney General, was to tell his stockholders that autumn:

We have found that there exists on the part of the officials of the Government a very strong and irremovable objection to your Company because of the stock interest held therein by the British Company. This objection is shared by the members of Congress to a considerable extent. Consequently your Company has found itself greatly embarrassed.

In two months the London purchase was completed and Nally and Davis returned to America with the British block of stock. American Marconi was now wholly American. The name Marconi, with its British link, was to disappear in November when the company became a part, and the main part, of the new Radio

Corporation of America chartered in Delaware, with a patriotic clause prohibiting forever ownership by aliens of more than twenty percent of its stock.

Nally became the first president of RCA and one of his first acts was a suggestion to the White House that the government appoint a representative of Naval Communications "of or above the rank of captain" to attend RCA stockholders' and directors' meetings. President Wilson obliged by appointing Admiral Bullard to this post. Some years later, in 1927, the same admiral became the first chairman of the Federal Radio Commission.

Again and again the influence of the Navy was revealed. It should be borne in mind that the Navy operated innumerable coastal radio stations and that throughout history no licenses for commercial wireless stations were ever granted if the Navy intervened in objection. The safety of America's first line of defense held permanent "A" priority rating.

A Navy suggestion led to the radio business practice of "cross-licensing." During World War I, the prosecution of victory demanded that no purely contentious factors of business management should obstruct the speedy production of matériel. But the Navy did not wish to assume the responsibility for postwar claims of patent infringements arbitrarily authorized by the Navy during wartime. Hence the advocacy by Captain Sanford Hooper of a plan whereby inventors and companies agreed to "pool" patents in a cross-licensing agreement by which full use of all mechanical devices, as needed for war, was assured and future litigation was waived.

This was a patriotic proposal originally. However, cross-licensing had many obvious appeals to businessmen in that it provided an apparent escape from the more nagging type of litigation, and it was projected into peacetime operations. But cross-licensing was not regarded by social critics as exclusively the innocent convenience it was often represented in the 1920's. They suspected



*Courtesy of General Electric*

Old-time daytime soloist



*Courtesy of General Electric*

Old-time nighttime musicale

*Courtesy of the Columbia Broadcasting System*

Television studio floor scene



"deals" between the Titans at the expense of the outsider and the little fellow.

The Radio Corporation of America was organized primarily to take over American Marconi as a first step toward a gigantic new Yankee enterprise. It was supplied by General Electric with a line of credit amounting to some \$3,000,000. There was the usual swapping of stock and setting aside of preferred shares as guarantees for sums advanced. RCA was endowed in the first instance with various benefits considered conducive to its corporate health. The most notable of these was General Electric's giving over of its own patent privileges to RCA for twenty-five years and RCA's reciprocity in kind. This was the beginning of a series of cross-licensing contracts that would bring other big industrial corporations into the RCA fold.

RCA started big and got bigger. The American Marconi properties alone were extensive, while the manufacturing know-how, patent position and banking connections of General Electric were strictly blue-chip values. The Alexanderson Alternator was itself a *raison d'être* for a corporation. RCA added another cubit to its stature when, in July of 1920, it effected a cross-licensing agreement with the American Telephone & Telegraph Company. Still another pioneer developer of wireless patents, the United Fruit Company of Boston, came into the RCA family in March of 1921. United Fruit had found radiotelegraphy invaluable in promoting the safety at sea of its Caribbean banana-hauling "Great White Fleet" and in minimizing losses incident to fruit spoilage. Wireless instructions permitted plantation superintendents in the tropics to co-ordinate accurately their harvesting and dock deliveries with ship movements.

Each of these three corporations was a big business in its own right. Together they gave enormous power and prestige to RCA.

Meanwhile Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company, the Pittsburgh competitor of General Electric, was outside in the

cold and didn't like it. Throughout 1920 Otto Schairer busied himself to offset GE's advantage. Certain valuable radio patents of the former Fessenden company were controlled by a moribund International Radio Telegraph Company with which Westinghouse now arranged a cross-licensing deal whereby International would be able, in a year or two, to undertake commercial operations, or so they thought, on a considerable scale. Westinghouse next turned to the United States Government, itself the owner of over one hundred and twenty-five patents. Although the government would not give Schairer an "exclusive" license, the right to use its patents was nonetheless significant. Privately Westinghouse acquired, in the fall of 1920, the highly useful Armstrong-Pupin patents.

His contemporaries felt confident they were complimenting Otto Schairer in assuming that he was too astute a bargainer ever to have really supposed that International Radio Telegraph could buck RCA in actual commercial communications. Rather it was thought his hasty gathering of patents had done what he wanted to do all along—get Westinghouse into the RCA picture on favorable terms.

Without attempting to distinguish real boxing from shadow-boxing the historic fact is this: in July 1921 Westinghouse and International Radio Telegraph Company became parties to the RCA cross-licensing setup and Westinghouse secured a substantial if minority position. It was to supply forty percent and General Electric sixty percent of all radio equipment thereafter to be sold by RCA as exclusive sales agency for both electrical manufacturers. The contract authorized RCA to sell such equipment at twenty percent above billing.

By 1922 when the original corporate structure was fairly complete and RCA was in full stride, some 9,689,974 shares of stock were outstanding. Over fifty percent was held by the cross-licensees and the remainder was scattered among former stockholders in

American Marconi and persons who had bought RCA shares speculatively. This was the standing of the big corporations:

	Shares	Percent
General Electric . . . . .	2,496,800	25.7
Westinghouse . . . . .	2,000,000	20.6
American Telephone . . . . .	400,000	4.1
United Fruit . . . . .	360,000	3.7

While Mr. Young was no doubt quite pleased that things had developed so nicely, it is equally probable that Mr. Schairer was satisfied to have ended up not too badly. The American Telephone & Telegraph Company was content, at least for the time being, that the all-important radio vacuum tube was unclouded legally and AT&T could devote itself to the perfection of long-distance telephone service, its great ambition. United Fruit continued to haul bananas.

These corporations were bound together in radio comradeship by hoops of legal steel forged by their lawyers. The rights of each high contracting party were unmistakably spelled out in the covenant. RCA was "neat." It was supreme in the field of radio.

Unfortunately the corporation lawyers had made, but did not then know it, a colossal miscalculation of the nature of the business for which they had drawn up contracts. The lawyers supposed, as did the majority of communications men at the time, that "radio" meant radiotelegraphy. They considered that they were dealing essentially with a business comprising functions "A" and "B": A, the innovation, manufacture, installation, lease or sale of apparatus, and B, the traffic in messages relayed point-to-point at so much a word.

In the brilliant white light of hindsight we now know that the real big news in the air had taken place, little noticed by contemporaries, on Christmas Eve of 1906, in Paris during 1908, at

the Metropolitan Opera in January 1910 and in the area of Detroit and Pittsburgh during the summer and fall of 1920. Radio-broadcasting was not just a cousin-in-future-tolls. It was an entirely new species of phenomenon. By 1923 a boom in receiving sets was on and the industrial, financial and social meaning of voices in the night could be appreciated. The same corporation lawyers—with reinforcements—then had to spend 1924, 1925 and 1926 tidying up.

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## CHAPTER II

### GROWING PAINS AND EMBARRASSMENTS

RCA had an ambitious—as it thought—plan of expansion in 1921—expansion for radiotelegraphy. During the year Owen D. Young, as Board chairman, went to Europe to negotiate a four-nation agreement—an agreement specific to Morse code wireless. He sat down to bargain for RCA with British Marconi, Compagnie Française des Cables Télégraphiques and Telefunken of Germany. This was, at the outset, a strange tea party, for the French delegates loathed the very proposal of sitting down in the same room with the Germans. Business interest, however, rose above national feelings and agreements were ultimately worked out. A world division of areas of radiotelegraphic service among the four big companies was established. There remained the dilemma of the important but sparsely settled continent of South America. The prospect of duplicate services with not enough traffic to make it worth while for the competitors was circumvented by a consortium drawn up by Owen D. Young. This cleared the way for a single South American wireless service whose stock would be held equally, twenty-five percent to each, by the American, British, French and German companies. The principle of quarter-interest was also applied to the board of governors. Each nationality would have two representatives but a ninth member, the chairman, was to be an American appointed by RCA.

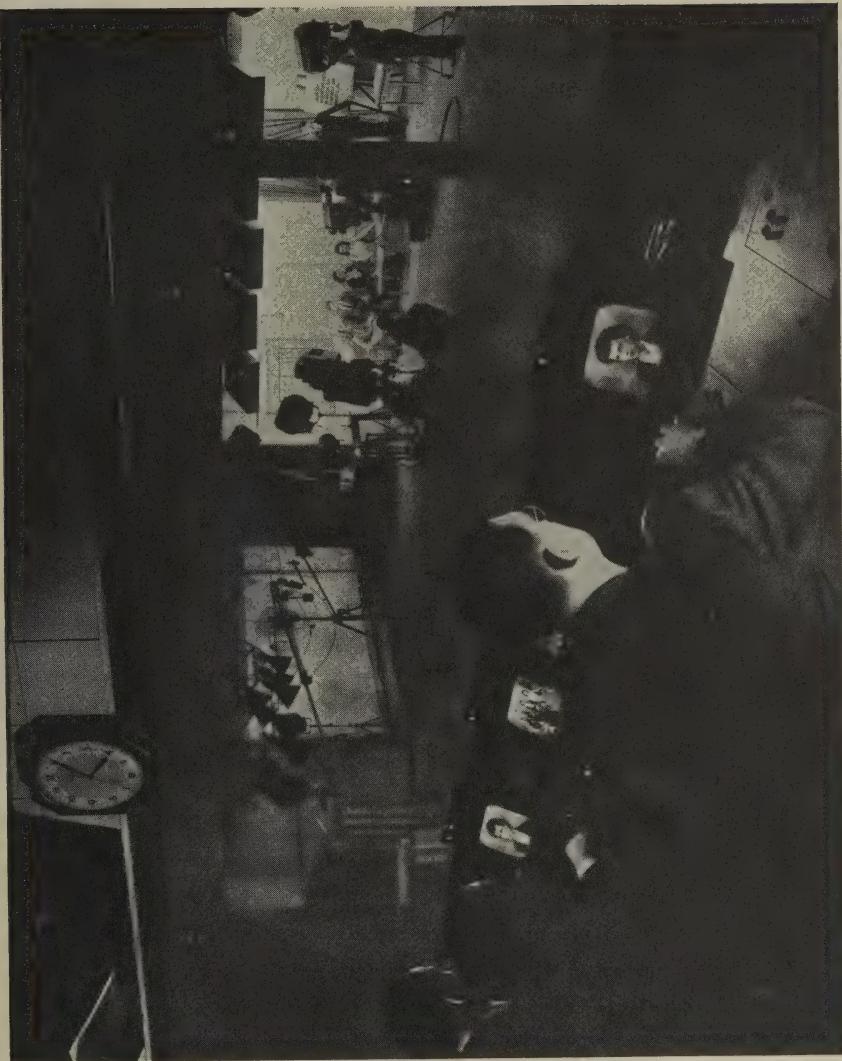
Cable competition, and how to meet it, was the big issue. RCA would eventually set up RCA Communications, Inc., to handle international service, while its Radiomarine Corporation specialized in ship-to-shore traffic. Although RCA's gross revenues from

wireless remained comparatively modest, only around \$4,000,000 annually during the mid-twenties, wireless both in its own reckoning and in the fears of the cable syndicates definitely threatened the previous importance of underwater communication in world affairs. This remained true even though for the next twenty years the cable companies held seventy percent and more of the total volume of international message traffic. Wireless' greatest impact perhaps was in terms of military and diplomatic strategy in the event of future wars. Never again would the severance of a cable line by enemy action or the shifting of its terminal point be a solar-plexus blow. Never again could any one nation bottleneck international communication. During the early period of World War I the London authorities, in the enforcement of their blockade of Germany and Austria-Hungary, were able to choke off cable messages of direct or indirect benefit to the Central Powers. They were able to kill cablegrams altogether, censor them in part, delay them until their value was lost or until countermeasures could be initiated by the Allies. At the least all "neutral" messages had to wait while messages referring to British, French and Allied interest generally took priority. These actions represented legitimate wartime self-help for the British Group and fair offensive against the German Group, but nonetheless, many Americans were displeased that such a bottleneck had existed and that the main flow of European cable service was subject to London's supervision.

Wireless would eventually cancel this British advantage. Similarly it lessened the value of British control of the world supply of gutta-percha, the Asiatic substance necessary to the insulation of underwater cables.

The known and the foreseeable facts of wireless were sufficiently dizzying in 1920 and 1921. Small wonder that most of the lawyers and executives of RCA were preoccupied with their maps, their consortiums and codicils, the exciting task of meshing a new American combine with the outer world of realities. It was all too easy to overlook the omens of something more spectacular still—

As the television director sees it





Cold lights do not "cook" actors

the phenomenon known as broadcasting. A nice regard for the unadorned record requires this statement: the glamour since bestowed upon the 1920 performance of KDKA, Pittsburgh, is a retrospective recognition of its significance. The event passed mildly indeed at the time.

One official of RCA had foreseen the final utilization of broadcasting—that is to say in the family parlor as an entertainment medium—and he was to become celebrated as a prophet when the contents of a memorandum he had written in 1916 became known. This official was David Sarnoff, an immigrant from Minsk, Russia. Fascinated by wireless as so many lads of his period were, Sarnoff, aged fifteen, secured a job as an office boy with the old American Marconi company. This was in 1906. Ten years later Sarnoff, self-taught and taught in night school, was the assistant chief engineer of American Marconi, in which capacity he addressed his boss, Edward J. Nally, in a spirit of clairvoyance. Said transplanted, autodidactic, prophetic, twenty-five-year-old Sarnoff in 1916:

I have in mind a plan of development which would make radio a "household utility" in the same sense as the piano or phonograph. The idea is to bring music into the house by wireless.

While this has been tried in the past by wires, it has been a failure because wires do not lend themselves to this scheme. With radio, however, it would seem to be entirely feasible. For example—a radio telephone transmitter having a range of say 25 to 50 miles can be installed at a fixed point where instrumental or vocal music or both are produced. The problem of transmitting music has already been solved in principle and therefore all receivers attuned to the transmitting wave length should be capable of receiving such music. The receiver can be designed in the form of a simple "Radio Music Box" and arranged for several different wave lengths, which should be changeable with the throwing of a single switch or the pressing of a single button.

The "Radio Music Box" can be supplied with amplifying tubes and a loudspeaking telephone, all of which can be neatly mounted in one box. . . .

The same principle can be extended to numerous other fields as, for example, receiving lectures at home which can be made perfectly audible; also events of national importance can be simultaneously announced and received. Baseball scores can be transmitted in the air by the use of one set installed at the Polo Grounds. . . .

Such grandiose concepts of radiobroadcasting were not then, or for several years thereafter, acceptable statements of probable fact to most men in Morse code communications. They continued to think of radio largely in terms of tolls collected for messages sent point-to-point from a specific sender to a specific addressee and as engineering and manufacturing in connection therewith. Broadcasting considered as a regular schedule of entertainment and information seemed too fanciful for credence. Certainly there was no precedent to go by. Prophet Sarnoff himself was notably wide off the mark in a number of important details and he was one of the last rather than one of the first to accept advertising sponsorship as a means of supporting broadcast service.

Nor did Westinghouse itself immediately comprehend the full import of its own radiobroadcasting experiments in Pittsburgh. These had been in progress for some time. They were about as significant as the informal programs of phonograph music heard by hams tuning in on a dozen other experimental stations around the U.S.A. in those days, but not necessarily more so. Westinghouse's radio expert, Dr. Frank Conrad, was perhaps a better than average technician and his broadcasts from the garage of his Pittsburgh home did attract special interest. A station in Detroit subsequently known as WWJ was also active with voice and recorded music transmissions just after the war, because of the enthusiasm of Bill Scripps, the teen-age son of the man who owned the Detroit News.

The Westinghouse station bore the call letters 8XK. Its phonograph records were donated by a neighborhood music store in return for a courtesy mention over the air, providing the first crude

hint of the advertising tie-ups to come in radio. The popularity of 8XK was greater than the company then knew, for it was with real astonishment that a Westinghouse vice-president, H. P. Davis, picked up a Pittsburgh daily newspaper one day and found a local department store offering radio-receiving equipment for sale "for those who want to tune in the Westinghouse station." Davis reasoned that if a hard-bitten department-store merchandizing specialist considered public interest in broadcasting a market worth advertising to, then perhaps radiotelephony's future did not lie in becoming another "confidential" medium, but instead in becoming a public medium. Davis, his eyes opened, speedily arranged a special budget and special assignment for Frank Conrad. The engineer was forthwith to erect a "powerful" new 100-watt station. This was KDKA (present strength: 50,000 watts) and it went on the air election night, November 2, 1920, to broadcast the returns which spelled out the victory of Warren G. Harding over James M. Cox. It has been estimated that no more than two thousand persons actually heard this KDKA broadcast, but historically the event looms larger than the audience.

In the summer of 1921 came another historic broadcast. The American boxing champion, Jack Dempsey, met the French champion, Georges Carpentier, at Boyle's Forty Acres in Jersey City, and the event was aired. David Sarnoff, by that time an important official of RCA, had urged the editor of the magazine *Wireless Age*, Major J. Andrew White, to organize the pickup. At the time there was no station except KDKA that could handle such a technical problem, so White was confronted by the task of creating a special radio station for the Dempsey-Carpentier bout alone. Thanks to the RCA "in" with General Electric, White was able to borrow a transmitter built by General Electric for the United States Navy, but not yet turned over to the Navy. An aerial was set up between two Lackawanna Railroad towers at Hoboken, New Jersey, and with two radio technicians, J. O. Smith and Harry Walker, to assist him, the radio editor perfected arrangements for

the première blow-by-blow. Actually it was Smith talking from the Lackawanna towers that the listening public heard in 1921. White at the ringside could "broadcast" only to Smith at the relay point. Remote control, today's commonplace, had not yet been developed.

Tens of thousands of Americans, many of them high-school lads, now began building makeshift home receivers, or radio-phones, as they were then called. The astonishing fact was that these amateur home-built sets worked, even if accompanied by blooping, souping, cross-fading, key clicks, mysterious screams and endlessly baffling silences. The power of radio came up and fell away without explanation as the fans sat huddled over their dials, earphones clamped to their skulls. It often seemed more than a little lunatic to sit hours on end while nothing, absolutely nothing, happened. In the morning the owners of the more elaborate apparatus might boast of their DX (distance) triumphs:

"I got Schenectady."

"Denver was as clear as a bell."

"I think it was San Francisco but it faded before I could hear the call letters."

"They were speaking Spanish. It must have been Havana!"

This was the day of the whimsically named "cat's whiskers sets" most of which were hardly more than toys. A much-valued component part of a "cat's whiskers set" was an empty Quaker Oats cardboard container from the family pantry. This was first shellacked and then wound round and round with wire to form an aerial. When attached to a sensitive rock crystal and earphones, the aerial actually possessed the fantastic ability to "condense" words and music out of the air.

Radio puttering was one of the great fads of the 1920's in the era of normalcy and prohibition, real-estate booms and installment buying. The market for parts, wires, earphones, crystals, blueprints, coils and an abundant technical literature literally skyrocketed. The home-set builders and later the factory-set builders

made it worth while for newspapers to have radio editors and for their space salesmen to promote special radio issues.

Hams began gathering together in community or regional meetings of their own to exchange data, exhibit their models, get acquainted with personalities they knew only as voices in the ether. Groups of amateur operators would rent two or three hotel display rooms for a few days and invite the radio fraternity in for gab fests. They talked, ate, slept radio.

Later came the more public and less esoteric radio shows in the bigger cities. The men who promoted these affairs wistfully, but mistakenly, pictured a time to come when the annual radio show would compare in social *chi chi* with the elegantly gowned and coiffured turnout of the annual automobile shows.

Admission to a radio show usually cost fifty cents. Inside a big civic auditorium or state guard armory the leading manufacturers and jobbers unveiled their wares. Philco, Zenith, Atwater Kent, Grigsby-Grunow, Freed-Eisemann, Stromberg-Carlson and many others were the trade names to reckon with. The public went along the aisles, looking at the latest radiophones and storage batteries tied up in Christmasy red ribbons. Baby spotlights played upon black bakelite or elegantly boraxed fronts. Velvet ropes and potted palms and bobbed-haired flappers passing out leaflets completed the picture. Knowledgeable radio salesmen were on hand to answer questions and take orders. To quote Larry Nixon, an old-timer in arranging such events, "They were not too interesting if you weren't already interested." Radio shows exhibited, however, a certain quality of commercial whoop-de-do that was reflective of the early twenties, the era of ebullient optimism, bad gin, Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, dollar-down-and-dollar-when-you-catch-me, and elevator operators playing the market. The nation was developing its margin-happy complex and the size, cost, gloss and make of one's radio was, with the family car and the family icebox, an index of social swank.

The American public invested \$60,000,000 in home sets during

1922. Sales zoomed to \$136,000,000 in 1923, and this may be identified reasonably as the year in which a lot of previously contented RCA executives began to grow acutely restless under the terms of the original cross-licensing agreements. Set sales doubled their 1923 figure in 1924, reaching the total of \$358,000,000 in retail volume, stupendous for a brand-new industry. The sales curve kept mounting until the fateful year of 1929 when \$843,000,000 worth of radio-receiving equipment was sold.

All this while people disagreed violently about radio. Irate neighbors in urban centers screamed across back lots, "Turn off that confounded racket!" but on remote farms, in isolated mining and lumbering camps, the radio was a God-given link with the outside world and its name was blessed. Because of broadcasting fewer lonely wives of taciturn farmers would lose their reason. Because of radio the lot of chronic bedridden invalids was infinitely brighter. When one senator, Reed Smoot of Utah, dared to propose a Federal tax on radio sets, he was snowed under with protests from angry lovers of the medium.

Little by little communications men came to realize the dynamic differences between broadcasting and the traditional "confidential" media. Radiobroadcasting was great precisely because it was extrovert, emotional, entertaining. Millions of sets sold on that basis; hundreds of local radio stations were established to provide the entertainment. Two years after KDKA's first emissions, the United States had 382 licensed stations. In the following year, 1923, the total rose to 573. These were licensed, in the main, to radio manufacturers, jobbers, retail outlets of various kinds—a "broadcaster" originally tending to be a manufacturer or merchant out to stimulate sales of radio sets, radio parts, radio batteries, radio tubes, radio aerials or what have you.

The National Association of Broadcasters was founded in 1922 and it is significant that its first president was a radio-set manufacturer, Eugene McDonald of the Zenith company, which then operated a station in Chicago. The factory men had seen very

clearly the importance of radio stations in every populous area and the necessity of regularized program service. At the time the standard concept of radio entertainment was a number of phonograph recordings interspersed by an announcer's remarks. It was added velvet if the station promoted live talent. An amateur tenor, soprano or pianist was considered quite delectable and almost any kind of diversion including yodelers and Swiss bell ringers was welcome just so long as it was "on the cuff." Engineering and electricity were accounted legitimate operational items in broadcasting but artistic talent was not supposed to expect folding money. A rude jolt awaited the innocents of 1922 for there was then in existence, eight years old and full of crusading zeal, a so-called American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. This society, founded in 1914 by Victor Herbert, had secured the enactment by Congress of iron-riveted copyright laws under which it had successfully brought to meekness various cabarets, theaters, parks and other theatrical users of popular music. When ASCAP informed every radio station in the United States that it must take out a license with the society and agree to pay a stated schedule of performance fees or face an endless chain of copyright infringement suits, there was no doubt whatever of ASCAP'S power. Under Federal law every violation for copyright infringement carried minimum statutory damages of \$250. No easygoing judge could let the guilty party off with a mere reprimand.

"We're just starting out in life," protested the broadcasters.

"You're playing music for profit," declared ASCAP.

"Music for profits!" cried the startled broadcasters. "What profits?"

"Radio programs make possible the sale of radio sets and radio sets are sold at a profit, are they not?" was the stern rejoinder of the music men.

The National Association of Broadcasting went white with revulsion. "This is an outrage!" they screamed.

"Sign here," said ASCAP, pointing.

This was the beginning of the radio business' longest and most spectacular trade feud. Most broadcasters were to go apoplectic at mention of ASCAP for the next eighteen years.

In 1922 and 1923 ASCAP's disconcerting demands represented to the new business one of the more pronounced discomfitures of inexperience. In due course actors and singers and comedians and directors and finally even writers would still further embarrass the broadcasters by financial demands.

Where was the money to come from? The idea of advertising sponsorship shocked many a statesman and editor. As early as November 1922 *Radio Broadcast Magazine* puckered its brow in disapproving comment:

Driblets of advertising, most of it indirect so far, to be sure, but still unmistakable, are floating through the ether every day. Concerts are seasoned here and there with a dash of advertising paprika. You can't miss it; every little classic number has a slogan all its own, if it is only the mere mention of the name—and the street address—and the phone number—of the music house which arranged the program.

In its issue of March 29, 1924, *Outlook Magazine* alluded to radio as "a lusty child not yet three years of age, who, nurtured on the rich milk of free publicity, has cut its teeth and now craves the strong meat of profit."

How would the public react, in the end, to radio advertising? Would there be a showdown and a repudiation? This issue was debated for the first several years. Sarnoff and RCA and Herbert Hoover shied away from advertising as a means of financing radio broadcasts. Sarnoff belonged to the group who hoped that philanthropists would come forward and endow radio programs because of their "educational" value. Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Princeton, Vanderbilt, Duke, Chicago and many another university had been richly remembered in the wills of the great tycoons of railroading, oil, telegraphy, farm machinery, mining and other industries who

had thrived mightily in the decades following the Civil War and were now passing on. Income taxes and inheritance taxes were negligible at this period, so it was seriously asked: "Why should not the Rockefellers, the Harknesses, the Guggenheims, the Astors and others in their financial class look kindly upon radiobroadcasting with its great potential power for enlightenment?" Let just one of the big Eastern maharajahs purchase and subsidize a big high-powered station and the ice would be broken. So ran the argument. But the ice was never broken.

Here and there a philanthropist did come forward in a modest way during the early 1920's. The Honorable Victor Hansen, publisher of the Birmingham *News*, gave the Alabama Polytechnic Institute equipment for a small station. Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*, did as much for the Georgia School of Technology, while W. J. Scripps of the Detroit *News* presented Michigan State College with a 500-watt Western Electric transmitter which had formerly been used by WWJ, Detroit. A Mrs. J. Korber donated funds for a radio station at the University of New Mexico and the Lupton family's benefactions made Oglethorpe University's radio station possible. Colonel Edward Green, son of the picturesque Wall Street figure, Hetty Green, operated a radio station, WMAF, at Dartmouth, Massachusetts, purely to indulge his private fondness for electrical experimentation. When WMAF hooked up with WEAF, New York, the network was foreshadowed.

But this type of casual philanthropy did not and could not provide the answer to program service or the basic economics of broadcasting.

Radio clubs proved sporadic, piddling and undependable. Donations came in, a few generous ones, but there was no way to count on donations either as to regularity or amount. Station WHB in Kansas City worked out a piquant plan to raise funds from the public. Using a "free subscription to our program log" as bait, WHB carried out the hocus-pocus of an "Invisible Theater" to

which radio fans bought tickets. Subscribers to the "Invisible Theater" could purchase an imaginary box seat for a real ten-dollar bill. Loges were priced at five dollars and a cash donation of three dollars entitled the sender to imagine himself ensconced in a dream seat in the mythical parquet. Other prices in the make-believe playhouse that never existed were: balcony two dollars a year; gallery one dollar a year. About \$3,000 was secured in this manner.

It is easy now to overlook the fact that broadcasters in those days were surrounded by skeptics who doubted that radio would be found lastingly amusing or useful and who jibed, "Do you think radio is here to stay?" One congressman of the mid-twenties miffed radiomen not a little by casually comparing radio to the Chinese game, mah-jongg. To him it was about the same: radio or mah-jongg, it was a way his constituents had of idling away a few leisure hours. No more than that. A wit of the time suggested "giving radio back to the Navy."

On the provincial level, broadcasting was definitely embarrassed by some of its boon companions. Prominent in this respect was "Doctor" John R. Brinkley, alumnus of the vague, obliging, and now defunct Kansas City Eclectic Medical University. "Doc" Brinkley established KFKB in Milford, Kansas, in the fall of 1922, his call letters signifying "Kansas First, Kansas Best." During the next several years this station broadcast a service of hillbilly music and medical talks as Brinkley conducted an intensive advertising campaign to drum up trade for his famous goat-gland operations, of which he performed literally thousands at an average fee of \$750 each. The goat-gland operation was supposed to revitalize elderly gentlemen. From the farms and hamlets of the Western states hundreds of citizens up to the age of eighty hopefully presented themselves. Every week dozens of frisky young goats were herded into the pens of the Brinkley Hospital.

Brinkley was a man of enterprise and imagination. He fought his enemies over the air with canny wit and picturesque invective.

For years he openly defied and insulted the American Medical Association. Meanwhile he supported himself and his family in the style of an Austrian archduke. Mrs. Brinkley's diamonds were universally described as awesome. The family lived handsomely in mansions and luxury hotels. They had limousines, a private cabin airplane and a yacht on which to escape the summer heat. They enjoyed foreign travel and took a trip around the world. On one European jaunt "Doc" quietly registered at the University of Pavia in Italy and came back to the United States not only a fellow of the Royal Italian Medical Society, but also bearing credentials from the London Medical Board.

In 1932 as his enemies were closing in upon him Brinkley abruptly decided to run for governor of Kansas. His name was not on the printed ballot and his admirers had to write it in. Campaigning entirely by radio, the doctor ran up a grand total of 183,000 votes in a three-cornered race won by the Democratic candidate with 216,000 votes, an outcome not appreciated by the Republican Party which thought of Kansas as safely its own. Brinkley shortly thereafter lost his radio license and sold KFKB to a Wichita insurance firm for \$90,000. He lost also his license to practice medicine in Kansas. These two blows might have depressed a man of lesser spirit. Brinkley's response was to run again for governor. He had no radio station this time. Instead he went zooming through Kansas in a cavalcade of automobiles. He stood up, a dapper man with a goatee, a load of charm and a fantastic gift of gab, and harangued 243,000 adult Kansans into favoring him for governor. This time the Republican candidate, Alf M. Landon, won, but his plurality over Brinkley was a scant 32,000.

Brinkley now proceeded to establish and operate a 100,000-watt station, XER, at Villa Acuna, Mexico, across the Rio Grande from Del Rio, Texas. He broadcast in a foreign land, got his mail in the United States, operated hospitals at Del Rio and Little Rock, Arkansas. He continued to maintain his own private airplane. He continued to gibe the American Medical Association.

Brinkley was definitely the most colorful of the motley assortment of self-promoters who came to radio in the early years. There were hysterical clergymen, enemies of Wall Street, enemies of chain stores, enemies of Catholics, Jews and Negroes, promoters of patented heavens. Tea-leaf Kitty from Jersey City went on the radio and offered to answer any three questions in a sealed envelope for one dollar. The meaning of the stars, the stock market, the future life could all be learned by enclosing cash. Falling hair or teeth could be arrested—just write. Fortunes in real estate could be made overnight—just write. Home cures for this, that or the other thing were available—just write.

Broadcasting was the refuge of hawkers of questionable commodities and services which could no longer persuade most newspapers and magazines to accept their copy. These were the years just after a series of reforms in the advertising world. The Pure Food and Drug Law agitation of the muckrakers and the organization in 1914 of the Audit Bureau of Circulation had conspired to enforce standards of reasonable statement. True, the National Association of Broadcasters passed its own radio code of fair practices in 1925 but, at the time, this wasn't taken very seriously.

It fell to Herbert Hoover as Secretary of Commerce to grapple with these first dilemmas of American radiobroadcasting. Hoover functioned under the obviously inadequate Congressional Act of 1912 which had been designed to fit the needs of radiotelegraphy. This law could stretch just so far and Hoover knew it. His tactic was to invoke industry-wide voluntary co-operation. The trouble was that the broadcasting industry was too new and too divided to agree on anything. On every side there was unmistakable evidence of conflict and anarchistic attitude. The conditions were hardly ideal for an appeal to self-restraint and forbearance. And yet there was, even then, an inner guard of responsible broadcasters who saw that there never would be an abidingly successful radio industry if every man operated as he pleased. The public would stop buying radio sets if they became convinced that the broad-

casters were playing fast and loose with them. Hoover called a series of annual radio conferences, in 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925. These conferences took a position against advertising, or at least advertising intended to provoke definite and immediate sales response. Hoover was repeating himself when he told the 1924 radio conference:

I believe the quickest way to kill broadcasting would be to use it for direct advertising. The reader of a newspaper has an option whether he will read an ad or not, but if a speech by the President is to be used as the meat in a sandwich of two patent medicine advertisements, there will be no radio left. To what extent it may be employed for what we now call indirect advertising I do not know, and only experience with the reactions of listeners can tell. The listeners will finally decide in any event.

A year later at the 1925 radio conference a special committee of broadcasters went along with Secretary Hoover and resolved "to deprecate the use of radio broadcasting for direct sales effort."

The country at this period had three kinds of stations: (a) those with direct advertising; (b) those with indirect advertising; and (c) those with no advertising of any kind.

Nobody was quite sure where the radio business would end. Glowing accounts of its future were smiled aside. The medium was somehow considered a flash in the pan. Anything that had gone up so high and so fast must come down with a thud. Magazine and newspaper space salesmen professed amused contempt for the circulation claims of the new advertising medium. Nor was show business sure about radio as an entertainment rival. Sime Silverman in his theatrical newspaper, *Variety*, expressed the conviction that radio should be watched but that excessive anxiety was not warranted. "Hits are not going to be affected by the radio-phone or any other entertainment," Silverman told his theatrical following, "but radio may reduce the aggregate of theatergoers."

Radiomen themselves were undecided about radio. It was a jolly

thing of course that the public bought their products in such lavish numbers but they were not quite prepared for the way the public raised such a fearful fuss about the poor quality of radio programs. In its increasingly vehement demand for better entertainment, the public struck out at all sorts of business practices which, in its view, tended to retard the medium. The public was with the broadcasters and against the congressmen who wished to tax it straight-away, for the public knew instinctively that radio needed to be nursed over the first anxious years. But the public turned upon the broadcasters and screamed for Congressional action when wavelength jumping became rampant among local stations to the general detriment of reception conditions. Presently the public began to make up its mind that one obstacle to better programs was the disposition of "rights" under the RCA cross-licensing contracts of 1920. The public did not know the facts but it did have a strong hunch.

The situation was indeed jumbled. Westinghouse after inaugurating KDKA in 1920 had secured licenses for additional stations in New York, Boston and Chicago. General Electric on its own set up WGY in Schenectady and KOA in Denver. Then in 1923 RCA, as such, negotiated a transfer to itself of Westinghouse's WJZ in New York City and also added WRC in Washington, D. C. But these three companies were conspicuously overshadowed in program operations by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company which aggressively asserted the exclusive and sole right to make, sell or lease radiotelephonic broadcasting transmitters and—more to the commercial point—the sole right for its own stations, and any other stations it chose to enfranchise, to engage in broadcasting for profit. Broadcasting not for profit was outside the AT&T's exclusive right to collect "tolls" which translated into advertising fees. AT&T began soliciting and selling advertising over its own WEAF, New York City, in the fall of 1922. The first account was the Queensborough Corporation which went on the air to sell Long Island real-estate lots.

About forty stations were presently licensed to operate commercially. They paid AT&T a franchise tax, ranging from a nominal \$300 to a maximum of \$3,000. The Bell System was less concerned with the license price than with the license principle. However, when the company moved against WHN, New York, the action was widely publicized in the press and the public definitely sided with the station which had sold advertising without the sanction of AT&T. Public opinion accused the Bell System of ignoble "bigness." There was angry talk about corporation lawyers with ice water in their veins. By contrast WHN was exalted into a symbol of deserving "littleness" and self-reliant, Yankee "rugged individualism." Home folks began asking why any private corporation should be privileged to decide what radio station could or could not sell radio advertising. This was, at the time, quite apart from the still-raging argument whether there ought be any radio advertising at all. Although law and contract were clearly with the Bell System the public drubbing was not easily suffered. As one telephone employee said after the WHN case: "More victories of this sort and AT&T won't have any good will left even as an auditing item." The phone company threatened to rival ASCAP as the new industry's favorite villain. More and more a distinction was emphasized between radiomen and telephone men.

During 1925 RCA Board Chairman, General James G. Harbord, gave Alfred N. Goldsmith the job of outlining a practical plan for a network to embrace RCA, General Electric and Westinghouse stations. Goldsmith dreamed up a so-called "Broadcasting Foundation of America" in which the big radio manufacturers, Atwater Kent, Philco, Stewart-Warner, Bosch Magneto, Crosley, Willard Storage Battery, National Carbon, De Forest, Zenith, Kellogg, Federal Telephone & Telegraph, Stromberg-Carlson and so on would be contributing subscribers. The proposed network would be hooked together by Western Union and Postal Telegraph lines and would accept a modified type of advertising sponsorship.

In the interim, RCA was openly estranged from AT&T. The

telephone combine had dumped its RCA stockholdings in 1923 and had been behaving ever since as if RCA and itself were obvious rivals, as indeed they were, for the domination of the new radio industry. And yet neither corporation was able, patent-wise, to stand alone.

Less onerous but still embarrassing to RCA just then, was its enforced deference to General Electric and Westinghouse in the matter of set manufacturing. Again and again RCA, as such, had to wait on the business calendar in Schenectady and Pittsburgh while the "independents" scurried about grabbing up the retail radio-set business. In 1925 when RCA went over the \$50,000,000 annual gross volume for the first time, the significant fact was that only \$4,000,000 of this sum was derived from international wireless. The remaining \$46,000,000 came from set sales. Hence the importance of this phase.

Under the 1920 agreement, General Electric and Westinghouse had the exclusive right to manufacture sets and RCA the exclusive agency to sell them. Notwithstanding these rights some 200 independent manufacturing companies were making radio receivers and perhaps 5,000 small machine shops were making radio parts. A majority were undoubtedly infringing patents vested in RCA. The task of stopping these wholesale infringements and regularizing the collection of royalties was not tackled by RCA until 1926. But thereafter a good ninety percent of all manufacturing, especially on the reputable trade-mark level, was brought under license, RCA compromising a theoretical back-damages claim of \$7,000,000 for a nominal and collectible \$1,500,000. These arrangements softened the pique RCA officials felt at their position in the radio-set market. Without prior sanction or contract the "independents" had collectively proceeded to pre-empt from sixty-six to seventy-five percent of retail set sales. RCA, the pioneer, was able to sell only one Radiola (the trade name for the product manufactured partly by General Electric and partly by Westinghouse) to every three or four outside makes.

In the end RCA manufactured in its own name. That was the motive behind its 1929 purchase of the Victor Talking Machine Company and its factories. Meanwhile, RCA was taking the first great stride of many great strides into the amusement world. It was organizing the National Broadcasting Company.

The lawyers had at last completed their tortuously prolonged revision of the original cross-licensing agreements of 1920 and 1921. The country received the astonishing news in 1926 that the American Telephone & Telegraph Company was selling out and getting out of direct participation in broadcasting. Station WEAF went to RCA for \$1,000,000, of which \$800,000 was the book value for good will. Various other considerations were involved. In return for waiving its legal rights AT&T secured a perpetually exclusive contract to provide the future radio industry with long-lines service. The Bell System thus acted to stop the use of Western Union and Postal Telegraph lines in network hookups.

The way was now cleared for a new program-servicing organization. On September 6, 1926, RCA acted by incorporating the National Broadcasting Company in Delaware. For a time RCA held fifty percent, Westinghouse and General Electric dividing the balance. Later RCA was to be sole owner of NBC. NBC began almost at once with two networks, a "Red" group of which WEAF became the key, or feeder, station and a "Blue" group of which RCA's old mouthpiece, WJZ, became the originating unit.

Harry P. Davis of KDKA, Pittsburgh, fame went on the first NBC Board along with Gerard Swope and Owen D. Young of General Electric. The board also included Dwight W. Morrow, Guy E. Tripp, E. M. Herr, E. W. Harden and M. H. Aylesworth. The last, a utilities publicist from Denver, became NBC's first president, while Harry P. Davis was chairman of the board. George F. McClelland, station manager of WEAF, was designated general manager of NBC. Charles B. Popenoe became secretary-treasurer.

With the organization of NBC the men in control of RCA must have realized beyond any shadow of further doubt that they were

not so much in the communications business, as classically understood, but rather in the entertainment business.

And radio-program showmanship was just beginning. In short order RCA was also concerned with the making of moving pictures, the operation of vaudeville theaters, phonograph recording and the publication of popular songs. All this must be read against the backdrop of the stock-market boom of the 1920's. Any corporation with a modicum of glamour was, in those glad mad days, sure to be inundated with opportunities for golden expansion. Branch out, divide, redivide, refinance, enter new fields, buy up old businesses, found a dynasty—this was the order of the day. In many respects RCA was the beau ideal of a modern major colossus. It was, to start with, based on inventive genius and exclusive or semiexclusive patents. A gadget-crazy populace thought that very fine indeed. Moreover RCA was a "service" industry and this was supposed to be the new type of capitalistic bonanza. Above all RCA was colorful, dramatic, brilliant, brainy, and brimming with revenues. Its spirit was bold, scientific and acquisitive. Its business associates were rich and famous. People recalled, too, that President Woodrow Wilson and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt had been its spiritual godfathers a few years before.

During 1926 the highly profitable motion-picture industry was being "wired for sound." The silent film was passing out. Talkies were coming in. Warner Brothers pioneered with their Vitaphone method. Western Electric, the telephone company's manufacturing subsidiary, was not far behind. William Fox had his own Movietone system, and the always enterprising Lee De Forest also entered the competition. RCA's engineers, on their own, developed the RCA Photophone system.

RCA found itself in a miserable trading position. It had neither a Hollywood studio of its own nor theaters. These were the indispensable face cards without which they could not play in the cinematic poker game. Warners and Fox together threatened to shut RCA Photophone out. Accordingly RCA opened negotiations to

purchase the Keith-Albee Orpheum chain of theaters and their affiliated Hollywood studio FBO (for Film Booking Office) Productions. About two hundred vaudeville houses were involved and at the time a third-rate film outfit but the two assets gave RCA the necessary "in." With the take-over the theater circuit became Radio-Keith-Orpheum and the film company became Radio Pictures.

Control over the Victor Talking Machine Company was secured in the spring of 1929 during a wildly rising stock market. The total consideration on paper was \$154,000,000 but the deal was swung by an exchange of stock plus \$20,000,000 in cash which RCA borrowed from General Electric and Westinghouse. The Victor purchase necessitated a drastic increase in the number of RCA shares outstanding and raised the General Electric-Westinghouse share in RCA from twenty-one percent to over fifty percent. Following the deal for Victor two popular music-publishing houses, Leo Feist, Inc., and Carl Fischer, Inc., were added.

World financiers at this period were especially beguiled by the expansion prospects in telecommunications. During 1928 Lord Inverforth's syndicate had maneuvered a supermerger. A new holding company, Cables & Wireless, Ltd., swallowed British Marconi whole. This was just nine years after the extinction of American Marconi. The British company had had a life span of thirty years. Cables & Wireless, Ltd., was in the tempo of the times. One Wall Street financial syndicate headed by the Behn Brothers cast an interested eye in the direction of RCA, fancying the notion of buying RCA out lock, stock and barrel and joining it with the International Telephone & Telegraph Co. which owned telephone systems in half a dozen foreign countries. This would have been the *ne plus ultra* in mergers but the laws of the United States flatly forbade just such transactions. It was the fixed policy of the country that the same management should not control presumably competing media. Whether reasonably or unreasonably America's antitrust philosophy was deep-rooted. Cynics might

call the free market an illusion and competition an expensive anachronism. Americans in general were loath to sanction cartels. It was part of the national credo that anybody could go into any business. The rags-to-riches legend would wither and die if a couple of dozen trusts finally controlled everything. American idealism demanded that hard work and brains had to pay off—at least in theory—in seven figures.

RCA was therefore obliged to report to the Behn clique, "Sorry, gentlemen, we are not in a position to entertain such proposals as yours."

Actually the period of frenzied finance was nearly over anyhow. The stock market collapsed in the fall of 1929 and prominent men in brokerage houses began jumping out of tall buildings. RCA like many another big corporation battened down and prepared to weather the depression. The boom in sets was over. The boom in mergers was over. In ten tumultuous years RCA had scaled the heights of worldly success. It had created a new Arabian Nights tale of a thousand wonders.

Now came the greatest plot twist of all. RCA, a pet at birth of the Federal Government, was served by the United States Department of Justice in May 1930 with an antitrust suit. *U.S. vs RCA et al.* also named General Electric, Westinghouse and American Telephone & Telegraph as parties to the original patent pool which now included 4,000 items. AT&T settled separately with the government on the ground that it had long since disposed of its RCA stock. Negotiations involving the others dragged into 1932, when a consent decree was accepted. This ended at a blow the General Electric-Westinghouse partnership in RCA. The two electric manufacturers were given three years to sell not less than fifty percent of their RCA stockholdings. Representatives of GE and Westinghouse were to quit the RCA Board within ten days. An elaborately detailed schedule of payments and offsets disentangled RCA finances. The RCA Building at Lexington Avenue and Fifty-

first Street in Manhattan became the General Electric Building in one proviso.

This was the dividing point in RCA history. The company created by other companies was now independent. It was now the sole owner of NBC. It was now a manufacturer in its own name. Its incredibly complicated relationships had finally been adjudicated. Although it faced hard times it was in many ways shipshape for the trying voyage.

In twelve crowded years RCA had run the gamut of corporation embarrassments and surprises, complications and disputes. It had been praised, damned, investigated, stipulated. It had been multiplied, augmented, expanded, revised, reorganized, refinanced, re-orientated and reformed. From the public's standpoint RCA was probably at its actual peak of prestige a year after the consent decree when it joined with the Rockefellers in making real that stupendous job of limestone and imagination known as Radio City.

With Radio City the broadcasting business definitely achieved a grand manner. It was in top hat and tails. It was here to stay.

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## CHAPTER III

### A LESSON IN ECONOMICS

Not long after the organization of the National Broadcasting Company the tycoons of radio might have been excused had they nudged each other rather smugly and whispered, "Don't look now, but somebody's pretending to be another network!" Well-fed NBC did indeed contrast painfully in 1927 and 1928 with lean and haunted CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System.

The tangled tale of the Johnny-come-lately network actually begins September 1926 at the Hotel Astor, New York, and it begins as an argument about something else. Nobody said, "Let's organize the Columbia Broadcasting System." Instead, somebody said, "What are we going to do about ASCAP?"

The National Association of Broadcasters was holding its fourth annual convention. This seems to have been—and not for the last time—a pretty dull NAB gathering. Only about thirty members had bothered—or could afford—to make the trip to Manhattan. They were rather drowsily assembled one afternoon in a hotel meeting hall when George A. Coats was introduced. Coats was not a radioman. He was a salesman for a road-materials company with headquarters in Philadelphia. His qualifications for addressing the National Association of Broadcasters appear to have been threefold: (a) he possessed in marked degree the gift of gab; (b) he was a personal pal of L. S. "Hap" Baker, secretary to an official of the convention; and (c) he just didn't like the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. Just why an expert in macadam and concrete was so exercised over the comparatively esoteric question of music-performance fees does not appear in the record. Suffice that it was a dull convention and

Coats broke the dullness with a passionate denunciation of the music society.

Coats banged the table. Coats waxed eloquent. Coats grew sarcastic. He implied that the broadcasters were patsies to pay music-performance fees. One of the broadcasters, Powel Crosley, Jr., of WLW, Cincinnati, jumped up, not appreciating the lecture and the oversimplification of the issue by a total outsider. Crosley defended ASCAP. By then the meeting had come alive. Most of the broadcasters were enjoying Mr. Coats who, by all contemporary accounts, was a man of pronounced radiance of personality. They enjoyed his strictures against their pet hate and they thought it quaint of Powel Crosley to attempt a defense of the Society.

“Don’t be slaves of ASCAP!” Coats told the broadcasters. “Cast off the shackles of royalty!”

“But how-how-how?” the delegates shouted.

That was the question. It was to be the question for years to come.

“Why,” Coats seems to have improvised, “you ought to form a gigantic program-building bureau. Be independent.”

This was pretty vague and Coats seems not to have inspired anybody else to action, but Coats himself went away from the Hotel Astor hypnotized by his own idea and the glorious prospects which it opened up. He knew nothing about radio programs but he did know the manager of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Arthur Judson. The upshot of his enthusiasm and Judson’s approval was the formation, within a month of the NAB convention, of the Judson Radio Program Corporation. Its sole financial asset was \$5,000 which a Mrs. Bettie Fleishmann Holmes put up in return for stock.

Coats and Judson at first entertained hopes of interesting RCA in their plan. David Sarnoff listened but after several conferences reported that RCA was not having any. Obviously RCA would look to NBC for program service. Nor was it buying a quarrel with ASCAP. While Judson had excellent connections in the

high-brow concert world (and concert talent was prominent in the early days of radio) the Coats-Judson proposal was too nebulous to have much appeal to the big radio combine.

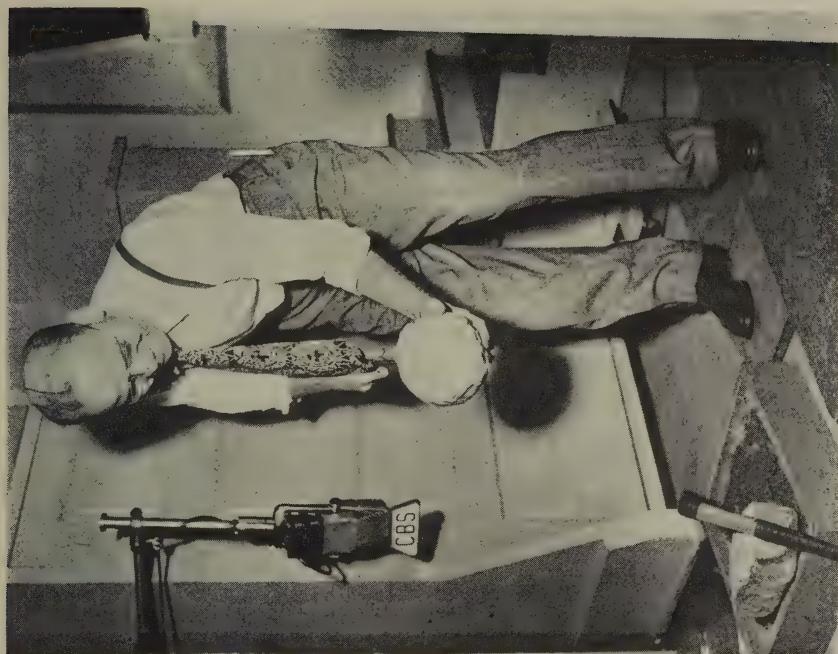
During one of their interviews with Sarnoff the two promoters announced, with what must have sounded like bravado, that if RCA did not encourage them then they would have to organize a network of their own.

"It will cost you a million dollars a year for line charges. Do you have that kind of money?" Sarnoff inquired blandly.

As a first step in carrying out their "threat" of another network, Coats and Judson organized in January 1927 the United Independent Broadcasters. A song publisher, Frank Marsh, was among the interested persons, and a Mrs. Harold Yarnell and Major J. Andrew White. White, the former editor of *Wireless Age*, had been an RCA man, had worked for WJZ in New York and WGY in Schenectady and had been general manager of Wireless Press, Inc. He brought with him a considerable reputation as a pioneer radio announcer and as an authority on radio-industry matters.

The promoters were busy in the early months of 1927 lining up their prospective network. An important coup was a one-year's lease to use WOR, New York, four days each week. WOR was the third-ranking metropolitan station in popularity. It was encouraging, too, when Arthur Judson's Philadelphia friend, the station-owning dentist, Dr. Leon Levy, agreed to link WCAU with the new web.

Like many another whirlwind who entered broadcasting in those formative years, George A. Coats was a better salesman than economist. He lined up eleven out-of-New York stations quickly enough. On paper United Independent Broadcasters looked good. But unfortunately the dollars-and-cents arrangements did not, under existing realities, make sense. Coats blithely promised each station he signed up that as a condition of their affiliation United would guarantee to buy ten hours of their time a week at fifty dollars an hour. This prospective revenue of \$500 a week loomed



Stabbed in the heart (of a cabbage)



Rattle of a snake (in a cellophane bag)



Walking through heavy brush



Landing craft scraping bottom

large indeed to the stations, but what it spelled out back in New York was a commitment to disburse \$6,000 each and every week with no visible income to offset such an outgo.

The new network encountered still further discouragement. AT&T was not at all inclined to be obliging about long lines. This was an obstacle to the new network which nothing but capital—as opposed to hopes—could correct.

By this time the promoters of the new network apparently forgot altogether their great crusade against music-performance fees. First things first.

Coats was assiduous during the spring of 1927. He struck sparks of interest with Paramount Pictures, Atwater Kent, even the Victor Talking Machine Company. But nothing came of any of these conferences. The rumor was growing in financial circles that Victor would ultimately swing over to RCA and NBC affiliation. Here was the circumstance that gave United Independent Broadcasters its first break. The Columbia Phonograph Company was concerned just then about the possibility of an RCA-Victor deal and was dreadfully worried about its own future in a radio age. "Parlor entertainment" had changed and would change even more drastically. Far off in the future—but already unmistakably hinted—was the additional competition of 16-millimeter home movies. Victor had rescued itself from the doldrums with the invention of an improved electrical form of orthophonic recording and its stock was, for the nonce, bullish on the big board. But phonograph men in general realized that the "soft" days were over. They were now faced by a grim challenge for sheer survival.

Coats found a sympathetic ear in Louis Sterling, a shrewd official of the Columbia Phonograph Company. Sterling appreciated his company's need for aggressive sales strategy to hold its own against Victor and he was willing to pioneer in radio advertising. The terms of the agreement Sterling made with United Independent Broadcasters called for all station-break announcements to read, "This is the Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System."

If the experiment paid off, the phonograph company would continue to operate the network. A consideration of the contract was ten hours a week of radio time which the phonograph company was at liberty to resell for a profit.

United Independent Broadcasters received a bonus of \$163,000 from Sterling and with this bankroll and an important client to point to, Coats returned to the telephone company and demanded long lines. The telephone company still demurred, however, whereupon Coats threatened to invoke the aid of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Lines were finally made available with AT&T apparently more than half convinced it would never be paid in full.

There was general skepticism about the new network. And when it was announced early in September 1927 that the inaugural program had been postponed two weeks, eyebrows went up. A thunderstorm on the night of September 19 marred the actual start, a specially arranged broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera's production of *The King's Henchman* with the composer, Deems Taylor, participating.

The tie-up with Columbia Phonograph lasted three months. Columbia sold back to United Independent Broadcasters its controlling rights in their network for \$10,000 in cash and thirty hours of free broadcasting.

Parenthetically it is interesting to recall that the Louis Sterling of this pioneer incident in American broadcasting is the same man who in later years became a British subject and, as Sir Louis Sterling, one of the colorful figures of London.

With the failure to hold the phonograph company as sponsor, Arthur Judson turned back to Philadelphia for counsel with his friend Dr. Leon Levy, of Station WCAU. Levy introduced a wealthy Philadelphian, Jerome H. Louchheim. Here the promoter George A. Coats reappeared with vivid word pictures of the project, and late in November 1927 a new operating company, the Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., came into being with

funds supplied by Louchheim, Dr. Levy and his lawyer-brother Isaac O. Levy. For some 1,020 shares the new company treasury received \$135,000 in cash.

Major J. Andrew White now got the job of returning to the stations affiliated with the new network and asking them for a modification of contract terms, since the \$6,000 weekly commitment was threatening to suffocate the network. White persuaded all the affiliates to accept an if-and-when scale of compensation.

This helped, but not enough. The situation was still adverse. The promoters went back to Louchheim for \$50,000, then another \$75,000, finally an additional \$100,000. Again during the fall of 1928 Louchheim was pressed twice, for \$10,000 and \$40,000 respectively. By this time the financier was in a mood to see CBS pass into hands of persons in whose business sagacity he had greater confidence.

Meanwhile the two Levy Brothers also had heavily invested in the anemic and transfusion-hungry new network. They, however, clung to their initial faith in the venture, partly perhaps because they had evidence within their own family circle of the potency of radio-network advertising. The Congress Cigar Company was owned by the Levy in-laws, the Paleys. In particular the young son of the house, William S. Paley, was enthusiastic about radio. He had had surprisingly good results advertising La Palina Cigars over WCAU and had extended his radio advertising to the new Columbia network with one of the most pretentious sponsored entertainments of its day, costing around \$4,000 a week. The cigar market had been falling off in the twenties as the aggressive merchandising and standardized packaging of the cigarette companies began to cut in, but young Bill Paley's "La Palina Smoker" show on CBS reversed the trend. From an average of 400,000 cigars a day, Congress presently was selling 1,000,000.

With such a practical demonstration of the potential of the Columbia Broadcasting System, sponsor Paley was definitely inter-

ested in buying into the venture. A deal was closed on September 26, 1928. Of the 2,515 shares which gave the Paley family fifty-one percent and control of the operating company, 2,085 shares were bought in by William S. Paley himself. He was then twenty-seven years of age. Louchheim, who retained a stock interest in CBS, knew Paley as a businessman of enterprise and resource.

Taking charge of CBS in the fall of 1928, Paley moved to New York. He found himself chief executive of a network then comprising twenty-two stations, with a gross revenue for the year of \$1,647,928 and a net deficit of \$380,822.61. He quickly increased the size of the network to forty-seven stations, dissolved the superfluous United Independent Broadcasters, increased the capital stock of CBS to 7,500 shares, and began laying plans for better programs, better staff and better operations.

It was a man-sized task of changing losses into profits, doubts into convictions, weakness into strength. CBS continued to consume money faster than it could be earned but the company's position brightened. CBS was able to borrow \$75,000 and another \$50,000 from the Chemical Bank & Trust Company of New York in June and July of 1929. In August the corporate charter was amended to increase the stock to 100,000 shares (half Class A and half Class B), at the same time reducing the capital from \$1,040,000 to \$700,000. At the time this cushioned CBS for the uncertainties ahead, and on a gross advertising volume of \$5,000,000 in the year 1929 CBS could report a bookkeeper's profit of \$475,000. In the same year NBC had \$700,000 profit on \$15,000,000 in gross time sales.

It was in 1929 that Paley made a deal with the Paramount-Publix Corporation whereby the film company became a forty-nine percent partner in CBS. This was at a time when RCA already owned Radio pictures and the Radio-Keith-Orpheum chain of theaters. Adolph Zukor of Paramount, with this tie-up with CBS, was strengthening his company to deal with the still confused but by

now all too definite rivalry of radio broadcasting in mass entertainment.

Zukor obtained the CBS stock in exchange for 58,823 shares of Paramount, then quoted on the stock market at \$65. The whole arrangement worked out creamily for CBS which acquired Paramount stock in a good Paramount year—1929—and was able, as events turned out, to buy back all its CBS stock during 1932, a bad Paramount year.

The brief connection with Paramount seems to have influenced Columbia very little. It affected neither policy nor personnel. The company remained throughout under Paley's direction and the effect of the recovery of the Paramount block was simply to provide a profit by the way and to reinforce the current regime. Of course a different tide in the affairs of Paramount Publix might have introduced other complications.

Meantime Paley faced tasks that would require years to resolve. Columbia's facilities, to begin with, were inferior to those of NBC, which had two networks and two years' start. NBC had prestige and "ins" with the biggest of big business. CBS was an unknown quantity, considered something of an upstart. Paley was a successful advertising manager. He was bold and experimental. But could he weather the heavy seas? Where would he find stars? The answer to the latter question was of superlative importance. Already the *cognoscenti* understood that stars made circulation, and circulation was the keystone of the arch of radio success. Paley's response to the challenge was to create the stars he could not otherwise hope to "buy." In a burst of showmanly enterprise CBS crashed through with Bing Crosby, Kate Smith, the Mills Brothers, the New York Philharmonic, the "American School of the Air" and many other programs designed to win CBS a due share of the radio audience. CBS established an open-door policy for ideas. Paley had, too, a young man's partiality to young executives. Some eighteen years later when he retired from the presi-

dency to become chairman of the board at CBS it was significant that his echelon of vice-presidents, most of them promoted from the ranks, averaged under forty-five years of age.

Sarnoff at RCA-NBC and Paley at CBS stand out in any account of American radio's first two decades. Each in his own time and terms was an empire builder. The respective histories of their companies are markedly different in design and detail, yet the two networks share certain pioneering experiences largely spared Mutual, after 1934, and American, after 1944. It was the task of NBC and CBS to "sell," not themselves alone or their respective facilities, but radio as such. This job was pretty well done by the time Mutual appeared on the scene, and had long ceased to be an important trade problem by the time ABC became a competitor. Mutual and American have both faced trying tests of management, judgment and resource, but essentially their vexations have existed separated from any basic challenge to the medium. And in the meantime fairly concise principles of program showmanship had been spelled out.

Networks as such have been from the outset, and still are, the dominant leadership units of American radio. Local stations sometimes resent and resist the influence of the webs and cry out that a network is nothing but a cluster of local stations linked together by long lines. Certainly it does not disparage a great many intelligently managed stations to emphasize what must seem obvious to most observers: the networks are to the total broadcasting industry what a general staff is to a total army. They write the rules, give the tone, indicate what may be described as the over-all posture. This has come about gradually. Neither Congress nor the Federal Radio Commission nor the Federal Communications Commission gave the networks their importance. They worked for it. They spend money liberally to set up their case and maintain their leadership. The cost of an educational series like CBS's "American School of the Air" runs well into six figures a year. ABC's "Town Meeting of the Air" represents an outlay in excess of

\$1,000 a broadcast. The Toscanini concerts, among the ecstatic musical treats of our times, have cost NBC in excess of \$250,000 per season. Such program costs are commonplace today. They are in themselves fair token of leadership and they are implicitly panoramic of the distance the networks have covered since the time, only in the late twenties, when every payday was an occasion of wonder and thanksgiving.

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## CHAPTER IV

### INSIDE THE RADIO PROGRAM "FACTORY"

AT THE Chicago, San Francisco and New York World's Fairs during the 1930's, American business went to elaborate pains and great expense to set up and operate factories in miniature so that the American public, gadget-conscious and process-minded, could stand and watch workmen create the great trade-marked products of modern mechanization. Familiar, too, were the sidewalk displays on Broadway where cigarettes or doughnuts or pancakes or barbecued beef were processed in full view of the passing world. Various food factories around the country installed observation galleries for the tourists who dropped by. On all sides during recent decades evidence existed of business management's appreciation of the good will and advertising to be secured through opening up the more dramatic phases of manufacturing to public gaze. As regards foodstuffs and similar products where the element of sanitary handling was important in ultimate consumer sales it had been most reassuring to the public to see, through a plate-glass window, white-uniformed girls with white gloves solicitously guiding the skinless frankfurters into chaste cellophane wrappings.

By the beginning of the 1930's it was a matter of interest to station and network men and advertisers as well that the public did not wait for studio tours to be organized or for visiting facilities to be provided. The public had come on their own and asked to be shown around long before many broadcasters were prepared to receive them. Some of the early radio studios were shabby and nondescript in the extreme. For example, a Los Angeles station

operated by an automobile dealer had its "studios" on the second floor of what was, in effect, a garage. Circus tenting had been dropped down from the ceiling to form "walls" within which the radio business was conducted. This was hardly a show place to which the public could be bidden. Announcers employed in the "good old days" at this canvased corner of motordom recall that between shifts or after a hard night they often curled up in the parked automobiles on that storage floor and snatched the proverbial forty winks.

Studio audiences were beginning to be conspicuous in the bigger radio centers like New York, Chicago, San Francisco and—after 1932—Hollywood. But pretentious broadcasts before invited guests were then—and since—familiar in towns and cities all over the United States. Kansas City, Des Moines, Seattle, Memphis, Hartford, Cincinnati and many another community possessed local means to satisfy public curiosity to see a broadcast.

The public did not view the preliminaries in the "manufacturing process." It was at rehearsal that script, score, actors, musicians, singers, announcers and sound effects went down the "assembly line" under the eye of a floor foreman, or radio director, whose task it was to tie all the component parts into a unified product called a program. The fact that there was to be a studio audience on hand to view the final packaging and delivery phase usually indicated that this was one of radio's more pretentious outputs, whether commercial or sustaining.

Thoughtful observers, even at the point of packaging and delivery, could not fail to note that program making was only partly a technology. It was essentially an art even though many a program in those earlier years was of mediocre artistry indeed. Part of the distinguishing quality of the radio business, as set apart from more orthodox businesses, and a clue to the fascination radio held for people in the mass was implicit in this combination of gadgetry and showmanship.

First of all, the studio premises usually aroused the curiosity of

the public. Here indeed was an odd "factory" for the production of a commercial commodity. A radio studio was unlike a theater, a concert hall, or even a moving-picture studio. There was never any scenery. Almost never was anybody in costume or make-up. Some studios had draperies which were drawn just before air time. But generally a radio studio was simply an open space, usually with an eighteen-foot ceiling, in which everything was portable—organ, musicians' racks, platforms, microphones, sound-effects cabinets and tools, chairs, lights and tables.

Acoustical considerations loomed large, of course, in the calculations of the radio engineer and the studio architect. These accounted for the bizarrely slanted walls, the strange mingling of materials, the porous and absorbent surfaces, the use of certain woods rather than others. Newer studios were sometimes "suspended" in space. That is to say they were designed and constructed to hang from girders within an outer shell so that they "floated" in spatial resonance. The casual visitor had no way of realizing this, for the studio was firmly anchored, was without perceptible give or sway and outwardly resembled just another room, albeit perhaps a trifle weird. More common was the radio studio in which one end had been treated to render it "live" while the opposite end was purposely "dead." Some studios had blades built into the walls. These "fins" could be opened or closed in acoustical adjustments.

In organizing studio facilities the engineer and the director adapted the size and resources of the premises to the demands of the program. The same studio would be set up in one way for a program with an elaborate orchestra and choral groups, and in quite a different way for an intimate bit of whimsy relying predominantly upon dialogue and calling for little or no music.

The all-important microphone offered little to "see." This delicately sensitive instrument of pickup was the beginning point in broadcasting. Without it there would be nothing. But a microphone by itself was an impenetrable mystery. Somebody had to

provide a little lecture and even then much was left unexplained, for only a physicist or an electrical engineer could really comprehend all the details.

The microphone was undergoing changes. By 1932 the physical appearances of these instruments were sharply different from what they had been eight and ten years before. As with studio equipment in general they were now more sleek and trimly efficient than the somewhat cumbersome and awkward-looking paraphernalia of yore. The "mike" was of many sizes and shapes. Some mikes stood nose-high on stands. Others hung down from booms. Some were squat, square, metal boxes alive only on one side, which rather suggested telephone mouthpieces. Mikes were concave in style and convex; they were cylindrical, streamlined, and some appeared to be metal cages. Engineers spoke of them, according to their sensitivities, as unidirectional, bidirectional, nondirectional.

The carbon, condenser and dynamic types of microphone were first in the studios. The carbon proved crude for radio purposes although still used in telephony. It was easily injured by loud blasting sounds and the electric current flowing through its fine carbon granules sometimes "hissed." It had to be very carefully placed in relation to the broadcasting group. Often in need of repair, the carbon was, however, easily installed and in its day had other compensating values. The condenser microphone was susceptible to humidity and barometric pressure and while free of the hiss it was on the whole a rather rigid affair. The dynamic microphone was a better pickup and was especially successful with the human voice. It had a rugged constitution and was useful out of doors. Broadcasters valued it also in the studio for an ability to convey a quality of "intimacy." It should be noted in connection with microphones that the modern, fast, subtle, every-word-must-count type of comedy program was quite impossible engineering-wise in the early days.

Velocity-type microphones largely replaced earlier mikes and

have remained in general use. The basic principle of all microphones was substantially the same. A sensitive diaphragm was stimulated or titillated by sound vibrations. These set up small electric currents which were weak (and inaudible) by themselves but which were instantly amplified into audibility. The velocity microphone consisted of a magnetic periphery within which was attached a highly sensitive, corrugated ribbon or diaphragm of duraluminum. The velocity type was also known as a "ribbon" mike.

Any microphone, regardless of its type, special traits or physical appearance, performed its function by "shivering" some 256 times per second in the presence of sound vibrations. Microphones were able to pick up and pass along the spoken word, the struck note, the special effect, and to do this with increasing fidelity although disciples of "perfect pitch" complained of harmonic distortion. Such virtuosi as Rachmaninov, Paderewski, Kreisler and Heifetz were unwilling to go on the air. The ordinary ear is perhaps fortunately untroubled by their superrefinements of tonal discrimination.

Almost every program called for some special adaptation or modification peculiar to its own requirements or the particular taste of its director. There were of course sundry trick devices. Most of these concerned "filterings" (of the microphones) employed to secure certain artistic effects. An "echo chamber" or "isolation booth" was used for subtle touches. A "flutter box" proved to be a long tube containing a noiseless revolving fan. The actor used this "flutter" as a queer megaphone or bottleneck through which he spoke into the microphone, thereby creating an eerie effect of speaking, say, as in a dream.

The resources of the sound-effects experts were extremely imaginative and varied. These could be roughly grouped under two general headings. First, there were manual effects which the technician actually created, when he walked in a gravel box to simulate footsteps, or up stairs which were real stairs, or—most obvious

of all—when he opened and closed doors. Then there were recorded sound effects. The networks and most of the larger local stations built up big libraries of such effects. There were special records—and techniques—for airplanes. How many motors? What weight? What make? What nationality? The writer and the director were offered a selection. Automobile effects ranged from stoppings and startings to screeching brakes on a hairpin curve. A full line of recorded crashes was on file—vehicular, burning timbers, large bodies, small bodies, gangster bodies—crashes in passing and crashes for big climaxes. Fire engines, explosions, various horses—running, trotting, foaming at the mouth—steam locomotives, Diesels, variable-speed gales, squeaks of all sorts, horns, bells, mooing cows, wheat or willow trees rustling by a brook, gurgling. The sound-effects maestros had said: "Just ask for it—we have it or we'll get it." One recording company went into the sound-effects catering business.

A somewhat esoteric quarrel went on in the radio trade as to the wisdom of exposing shop tricks to the general public at audience shows. Did it not shatter illusion irreparably to reveal that a piece of cellophane crunched in the sound-effects technician's hand was, in the transmutation of the microphone, a raging forest fire? Suffice that from the earliest advent of the studio audience the advertisers have greatly esteemed the public's personal presence and the direct, visible testimony of its delight. There was another consideration of supreme importance in sales strategy. Jobbers and retailers doted on a gift of free tickets from the salesmen who called on them. The printed invitation to attend a broadcast had become an open sesame to commercial good will.

Of course not all radio programs had or wanted audiences and not all radio studios were large enough or possessed facilities for seating visitors. Newscasts usually took place in tiny officelike studios. Sometimes it was an actual office into which portable equipment had been moved. With something like 65,000 fifteen-minute units of program every day in the United States it was

obvious that only a fraction of the total activity was exposed to guest inspection.

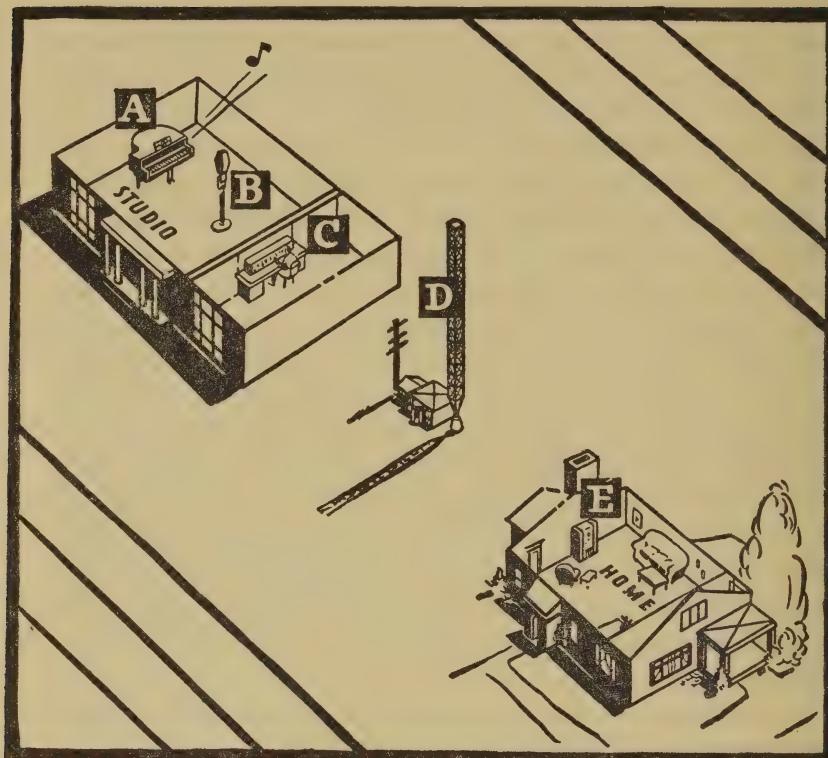
The broadcasting studio, large or small, was and is today tied by telephone lines to the broadcasting antenna, passing en route through control room, master switchboard and transmitter house. Sound itself, the scientists testify, is a relatively slow traveler. To recall the obvious: lightning is seen well before its own thunder is heard. It is the addition of electrical amplification and drive which converts studio sound into radio waves possessing, when they leave the antenna, the speed of light—186,000 miles per second. The leaping point at which words, notes and jokes, joined to a carrier wave, shoot out into space was and still is usually located out of town in open country. Radio has dotted the map of the United States with hundreds of naked spires of structural steel perched precariously on narrow cement bases. These are the antennas and they are today landmarks and trade symbols. One radio transmitter is pretty much like another in outward appearance although some are notably taller and more costly than others. Innumerable guy wires support the lacy shafts against the gales of winter. Red lights, by government edict, show at the mast in warning to passing aircraft by night.

Usually the transmitter house is a flat-roofed, one-storied, unadorned outpost. It is essentially a tool shed, a generator plant, a service department. It is full of copper tubing, glass and chromium, panels with trunk lines, meters and signal lights and men on duty who know what it all signifies. Giant tubes are contained in protective cages. Automatic safety gates bar the way to voltage chambers. Warnings in red block type with death's-head insignia bespeak the radioman's innate respect for electrical power. These engineers at their lonely vigils outside American towns and cities know well that every now and again in an unguarded moment of inattention death by electrocution is the fate of one of their kind.

From the microphone to the control room, from the control room to the network's—or the station's—master switchboard, from

the switchboard to the transmitter, the radio program is carried on lines. At the antenna it speeds forth as wireless. Actually there are—just to make it more confusing!—two kinds of radio waves. Waves of the one sort follow the curvature of the earth and are called ground waves. Waves of the other sort take off into space and are called sky waves. During daylight hours home radio receivers "detect" only ground waves, but "after supper" when the sun goes down mysterious changes in atmospherics occur. The scientists simplify it by reporting that the sky waves, after sunset, collide with a cloud of electrical particles about seventy miles above the earth. This is the ionosphere. Unable to penetrate this charged cloud the sky waves fall back to earth, thereby greatly strengthening nighttime radio signals. And this is an added thought: the sky waves go up seventy miles, ricochet off the ionosphere, come down seventy miles and arrive all in the proverbial twinkling at precisely the same split second their companion ground waves are being "tuned in." This is the everyday miracle of radio, about which, by 1932, nobody bothered very much. Instantaneous communication from microphone to home set via the ionosphere was easily taken for granted.

Certainly in the radio studio itself the workers were too intent upon their own immediate assignments to reflect on what was happening. Program production was usually a rushed and rushing task with all too little time. The public presumably did not realize this. They were admitted late. An apparently relaxed and easy-going announcer or star came out on the platform to "warm them up" (i.e., get the audience in a receptive mood for the broadcast proper). What the public saw mostly was the glamorous side, the finishing touches. They got little hint of the sheer hard work of the rehearsals and no intimation at all of the program-planning meetings, the script conferences, the preparations in the music library, the scoring. All these efforts aimed at the rehearsal and the final broadcast but were strictly behind scenes so far as the general public was concerned.



A—Piano . . . B—Microphone . . . C—Control Room . . .

D—Radio Transmitter . . . E—Your Radio

Sound waves travel from A to B; electric waves are then transmitted from B to C, C to D, and D to E, where they are again transformed into sound waves.

Very much in the public eye on occasion was the sportscaster, the special-events crew, the portable microphones on the trail of big doings. For these out-of-studio occasions the broadcaster and his equipment needed stamina and ability to carry on under difficulties of crowd pressure and noise, unforeseeable mishap, failure of cue, obscuring of vision and all the rest. In this area it was certainly not possible to standardize practice. The engineer and the announcer working as a team improvised as best conditions per-

mitted and they were appreciated and rewarded in relation to their judgment and resourcefulness. Radiomen took a very particular kind of professional pride in their out-of-door or out-of-studio pickups.

The out-of-studio chores of the wandering crewmen were strictly special. Usually a radio program originated, more or less formally, in a radio program "factory," where procedures were semistandardized by 1932. (Today "semistandardized" is still probably the most reasonable statement to apply.) Different programs and studio directors were setting up differently in 1932 as at present. The same NBC Symphony in the same NBC Studio had one "balance" (i. e., distribution of instrumentation) when Arturo Toscanini conducted and another when Leopold Stokowski conducted. These represented the contentious artistic theories of "perfectionists" but even among the dance orchestras the strong-minded maestro flourished.

In this chapter we have focused our camera on life within the radio program "factory" and its "manufacturing processes" involving an arresting combination of engineering and showmanship. It seems hardly necessary to add one final comment: This was—this is—the very heartbeat of broadcasting.

### *The Vocabulary of Broadcasting*

Meanwhile this perhaps is the logical point to introduce the question of "trade" vocabulary.

Every industry, profession and trade develops its own vocabulary and radiobroadcasting is especially prone to coin, borrow and alter words to meet the needs of an expanding phenomenon of our times, part business and part art, part engineering and part chautauqua. Radiobroadcasting does not have one glossary but many glossaries. Engineers have their own shorthand, salesmen theirs, actors still another. It is not necessary to attempt a fully detailed master glossary, for this text will avoid the more obscure terms.

But perhaps a few brief comments on the language of radio will contribute to general intelligibility.

A director speaks of a "bridge" between scenes. It may be, of course, a musical, or sound-effects or narrator's bridge. He speaks of a "board fade" meaning an engineering or manual tune-out of volume. Headphones in studio jargon are "cans." Any sound or spoken phrase that's low in volume or indistinct, diction-wise, is "down in the mud." Slang for the director's control room is "the fishbowl." An organ is a "Godbox." A remote broadcast (any program outside a regular studio and requiring the use of portable equipment) is trade-termed a "nemo." There is much reference in a studio to "on mike," "off mike," "stand by." The final rehearsal "just before air" is shortened universally to "the dress." "Stand by, cast; we're gonna dress" means "Don't leave the studio; the dress rehearsal is about to commence." "Take five" is studio patter for going out for a smoke.

On the commercial or business side of radio many of the words are quite clear by their very sound. The common term "network" signifies a group of stations. Synonyms often used in the industry are: hookup, chain, web, loop, leg. It becomes more "tradey" of course when reference is made to a "basic network." This means the minimum number of stations which a network is willing to sell to an advertiser and is in contradistinction to a "split network." Networks are of varying size, importance and costliness. They are "national" or "regional" in scope. They are all, in American radio practice, united by telephone company long lines and the word "network" is borrowed from telephony.

The term "sponsor" as applied to the advertiser who supports the program also has synonyms, all fairly obvious: account, client, advertiser. One understands quite readily that an "account executive" in an advertising agency is the liaison officer designated to keep the sponsor happy and to see that his wishes and instructions are met as far as possible.

Because the radio advertising "week" is commonly figured Mon-

days through Fridays (with Saturday and Sunday considered special problems) this five-day span is called "across the board." Daytime serials or any radio program repeated daily Mondays through Fridays is often called a "strip" or a "strip across the board."

There are many designations for local stations. Those which have membership in a network are called "affiliates." Their opposite numbers are "nonaffiliates" or "indies" (for independents). The numerous 100-watters are sometimes called in trade patois "one-lungers." Other names for local radio stations are: outlet, link, sprayer.

"Commission" looms large in the business life of radio. It should be borne in mind that the sponsor does not "hire" an advertising agency but "authorizes" one to act as counsel and buyer. The advertising agency collects—more accurately deducts—its commission at the expense of the station or network with which an advertising contract has been placed. It is the same with the "station sales representative" who is not hired but authorized to secure advertising contracts and—in compensation—to deduct a commission.

A radio program is a fairly obvious thing. It is usually fifteen minutes, thirty minutes or sixty minutes in length although odd-length segments occur now and then. A radio program may be a "commercial" (sponsored) or a "sustainer" (arranged and financed by the station or network) and it forms one part of a total "program schedule."

A "participating program" is one that is so arranged that more than one advertiser may make an "announcement." The announcement is a prominent part of radio advertising. Announcements are customarily defined according to their length. Thus there are cut-in or "chainbreak" announcements, from ten to thirty words in length, inserted in the pauses between programs. Since these pauses are slightly longer—twenty or thirty seconds total—than actually needed for local stations to identify themselves by call letters as required by law, the local station sells the few remaining

seconds for "quickies" or "blurbs," of which time signals, weather reports and so on are typical. Other announcements include the short fifty to seventy-five-worder and the longer one-hundred-word or one-minute announcement. It should be noted that the announcement is pure advertising with little attempt to pretend otherwise, although in recent years the singing commercial jingle, the one-minute "production" commercial including music and even humor, has modified trade practice profoundly.

Broadcasters and advertisers talk a lot about "audience." The meaning is pretty self-evident including the qualification expressed in the term "potential audience" which implies a distinction between the possible and the probable.

A "co-operative program" is a special variation of network operations. The program originates from a central point and is fed to the network in the usual way but when it comes time for the "copy" the network "fades out" and each local station "fades in" with its own local sponsor. This is, in effect, a system of multiple cosponsorship so that the expenses of a network show may be shared among many small advertisers instead of being borne alone by one big advertiser. The Mutual network has been a pioneer in this form of program financing.

Admen talk of "dead spots" (a location that ought to be but isn't satisfactory in a given station's signal area) and of "dealer helps" (window streamers, counter cards, leaflets, and so on) and they are especially interested in "discounts" of which there are many different species—cash, cumulative and frequency.

A distinction is always drawn between "live" and "recorded" shows and talent. As for "rates" here is something about which everybody in radio is extremely explicit. Rates are basic, national, network, local, gross, net, package, over-all, daytime, nighttime, "A" class, "B" class and so on.

"Transcriptions" are special radio recordings designed to be played on a turntable at a speed of  $33\frac{1}{3}$  revolutions per minute in contrast to phonograph records which turn at 78 r.p.m. It is re-

quired by FCC edict to announce, "This is an electrical transcription," or some acceptable variation thereof. In the trade synonyms for transcriptions are on the slangy side: platter, pancake, spinner, waxer.

"Rights" and "Copyright" are subjects of frequent reference among radio professionals. An agency asserts, let us say, the sole right to offer the George Spelvin comedy show for sale. Or in response to an inquiry from the copyright division of CBS a literary agent quotes a price on a certain novel based upon "one-time American radio rights." Each right to broadcast is spelled out in the contract. "We want all rights," the buyer may state. "We won't sell all rights—just one-time radio rights," the seller may, if self-assured, reply. Obviously the copyright owner strives to keep a given property unfettered so that over a period of time many sales to radio producers may result and the single story thereby earn a continuing income. The Federal copyright statutes protect unproduced stage plays but they do not cover radio drama. In general the author and/or owner of a given radio property must rely upon common law. "Copyright owner" customarily refers to ownership of published material from books and magazines, to stage plays and to the scenarios of motion pictures protected by the film's own copyright.

There is a very special branch of legal practice which specializes in copyright and literary property rights. In New York City and Hollywood particularly perhaps a dozen law firms guard and extend the frontiers of "intellectual property." We shall have further reference to the whole complex pattern of such rights in our subsequent chapter entitled "Justice for Genius."

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## CHAPTER V

### QUIET EVENINGS AT HOME

DURING the twenties radio programs were necessarily crude and congenitally amateur. As we have explained previously, very few entertainers were paid. In consequence program managers could not be choosy. They got too many Irish tenors singing "Mother Machree" and too many jiggly sopranos crying, "Listen to the Mocking Bird." Of talks, interviews and exhortations to repentance there was no undersupply. Nor were fortunetellers, horoscope readers and other gab-gifted specialists unready with private explanations of the meaning of life. Radio was perhaps safest in the area of classical and dance music, in sporting events and in pickups from banquets which were often distinguished if also dull. Most radio stations had to rely entirely upon their own staff and their own community since the networks were not really organized until the last couple of years of the inaugural decade. As for the stations in the Far West they were separated from the rest of the country a good five or six years after the populous centers of the East had been united by network hookups.

Program-wise American radio was developing sophistication and know-how in the first years of the 1930's. A rapid improvement in program quality coincided, happily for radio, with the stay-at-home habits which depression and panic had created in the United States. A populace with time on its hands turned to radio for diversion and was pleasantly surprised to discover that things were looking up. The horoscope readers and come-on artists had been sent packing. Crackpots and tub thumpers were under control. Rudy Vallee had introduced "crooning," which, whatever the sneering ones said, was still easier on the nervous system than the

earlier mammy-whammers. "Amos 'n' Andy" were a national habit at seven o'clock every weekday evening and they alone contributed enormous prestige to the new medium. The expectation of pleasure having been aroused, millions of previously lukewarm citizens looked beyond "Amos 'n' Andy" to discover what else radio had to offer.

Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Burns and Allen, Ben Bernie, Myrt and Marge were becoming household favorites. Radio traveling at 186,000 miles per second suffused the land with Jack Pearl's catch phrase, "Vas you dere, Sharlie?" Joe Penner's "Wanna buy a duck?" bounced off the ionosphere to the profound glee of the younger generation. Al Jolson was number seven in the 1932 popularity ratings. "Sherlock Holmes" had been established on the air and "The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu" as well.

Americans argued about these programs. Radio editors conducted polls and announced the results in headlines. This season was better than last, or not so good. Russ Columbo would or would not outshine and outlast Bing Crosby. "You Call It Madness, I Call It Love" was Columbo's message. The ladies swooned. Crosby, always relaxed, indifferently echoed, "Boo-booba-doo-do," and the contest was voted a draw.

Only the day before yesterday, figuratively, it had been sensational when the B. A. Rolfe Orchestra on behalf of Lucky Strikes dedicated itself to nothing but one-steps, nothing but choruses, nothing but hits and nothing, some critics complained, but noise. That had been a milestone in showmanship and socially minded contemporaries earnestly considered among themselves whether civilization had been merely threatened or definitely routed by this glorification of pandemonium.

During the twenties the radio "musicale" (whether classical, standard or dance) dominated the program-popularity ratings. America's radio editors voted their favorite programs for 1929 as follows:

1. Joseph Pasternack Orchestra (Atwater Kent)
2. B. A. Rolfe Orchestra (Lucky Strike)
3. Don Voorhees Sketches (General Motors)
4. "Real Folks" Sketches (Chesebrough Vaseline)
5. Nathaniel Shilkret Orchestra (Everready Batteries)
6. Walter Damrosch Symphony (sustaining)
7. "Roxy's Gang" (sustaining)
8. Gus Haenschen Orchestra (Palmolive)
9. Magazine Story Dramatizations (Collier's)
10. "Amos 'n' Andy" (Pepsodent)
11. Rudy Vallee Orchestra (Fleischmann's Yeast)
12. Harry Horlick Orchestra (A & P Stores)

The personality entertainer began to come into his own about 1932. Events had shown that the appeal of a Vallee, an Amos 'n' Andy, an Eddie Cantor was "personal" in a way mere music could never be. Music had its place. It always would be popular. But no orchestra alone could compete with the personality singers and after them the comedians. Ben Bernie was one orchestra leader who bridged the gap by emphasizing himself as a comedian, a purveyor of quaint sayings and a "character."

These were the years that shaped American radio as an advertising medium. What counted was not the simple decision of the broadcasters to seek their *raison d'être* in advertising sponsorship. It was necessary for radio to persuade skeptical men of business. In this they were unquestionably aided by the advent of hard times which not only built up radio's listening audience but shook businessmen out of their complacency. Casting about for new ways and means, new aids to merchandising, new advertising stimuli, they found the phenomenon of radio—what more obvious?—a challenge to curiosity. Radio became "hot." Radio became "respectable." Radio became "rainbow's end." The very disasters that confronted magazines with a drastic need to retrench, re-

evaluate, reorganize presented broadcasting with new friends not only among the consuming public but among the men and institutions whose self-interest made them peculiarly susceptible to the pulse of public interest.

All this produced a business revolution among the advertising agencies which had not been, in the aggregate, conspicuous for their welcome to radio. Radio was an unknown with all the unease-making capacity of the strange and the peculiar. Advertising agencies felt safe in the familiar haunts of agate lineage. They disliked a medium they had to take—in those days—pretty much on faith. And yet they could not ignore radio, for to do so was to ignore the nation. America was “crazy over” radio. They had asked radio for fan mail and box tops, and radio had faithfully flooded the mail rooms and brought postal inspectors running to find out what was going on. They had quibbled that you couldn’t mention price on the air, that you couldn’t know that radio had accomplished the sales spurt. But they couldn’t really keep the argument alive. Radio was “in.”

A third network, Mutual, was germinated in 1934 when four local stations, WOR, New York, WGN, Chicago, WLW, Cincinnati, and WXYZ, Detroit, united as the “Quality Group.” The first three stations were 50,000-watters and each station served a major American market. The first Mutual programs began in October. These included Horlick’s “Lum and Abner” series. At the end of 1935 Mutual had grown into a network of nineteen stations, had carried the World’s Series along with the other networks. In this year the Chicago *Tribune* unveiled an elaborate 600,000-dollar radio theater on Michigan Boulevard, and Mutual added, for further prestige, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Concerts. There were thirty-eight stations in Mutual by 1936, including the Don Lee regional network in California, Oregon and Washington. It was a nationwide publicity break for Mutual when its man, Gabriel Heatter, made radio history by his astounding forty-five-

minute "ad lib" report the night Bruno Hauptmann, murderer of the Lindbergh child, was electrocuted.

Year by year the numbers of local stations affiliated with Mutual markedly increased. In 1937 the tally was eighty-three, a year later a hundred and ten. In 1944, ten years after its first tentative beginnings, Mutual was an aggregation of two hundred and forty-seven local stations, more stations than were affiliated with any other one network. And the number would reach three hundred!

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE CRITIC ON THE HEARTH

CRITICISM of radio programs became more discriminating in the light of the growing realization that radio possessed an enormous power to serve good—or evil—ends. William Hard wrote of the dangers of “unabashed manufacture of public opinion” and thought radio “especially suited to that sort of deviltry.” Thoughtful men understood the subtle influence of the radio “visitor” in the family parlors of millions of homes with citizens softened and mellowed by music and humor and in a mood to be persuaded. The nation had learned to be suspicious of “propaganda.” Still gloomily quoted was the credo of George Creel, chairman of the Committee on Public Information under Woodrow Wilson. Creel had boasted: “Give me two weeks and the proper machinery and I’ll change the so-called mind of the American people on any given subject.” If Creel could make such a statement in the days before broadcasting, how much truer now his cynical brag!

It was recalled that Woodrow Wilson, utilizing the old-fashioned swing around the country in 1919, had undermined his strength and induced the physical collapse which destroyed his career and aborted the League of Nations. Newton D. Baker, for one, speculated on the results if radio broadcasting had been at the disposal of Wilson. Would he not have turned the tide of popular opinion, reinspired an idealistic attitude in the American people? He almost succeeded without radio. Seated at a desk in the White House and talking into a microphone, Wilson might have changed history. And he might have kept his health. Other people who knew the great Princetonian were not so sure that Wilson would have exhibited a winning radio personality. (The one

time he did broadcast—in 1923—he was a very ill man.) They argued that his intense but rather frigid intellectual passion might not have communicated itself by air. Such a debate, of course, is sheerly academic.

Paul Goebbels, imaginative, neurotic, unprincipled propaganda master and terror-spreader-in-chief of the German dictatorship of 1933-1945, took over German broadcasting entirely. Early in the regime he told H. V. Kaltenborn: "We [the Nazis] use phonograph records in broadcasting current events in order that we may first eliminate what we consider unsuitable. A current event should not necessarily be presented as it occurs." There was no balanced political discussion on the German radio. Instead there was the "Daily Motto" by which party dogma and Pan-German hysteria were pounded into the heads of the people. Goebbels was effusive: "We consider radio our most precious and potent instrument."

Others before Goebbels had appreciated the poison-carrying capacities of the medium. The manager of a certain New York City radio station, which no longer exists, was outspoken in his opposition to persons who were not White, Protestant and Nativist. He played a prominent part in the 1928 "smear" of Alfred E. Smith. He was openly and blatantly anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, anti-Negro, anti-Liberal. When the American Civil Liberties Union pressed him to provide time on his station for persons holding opposing views, he bluntly said he recognized no such responsibility and had no intention of obliging. Neither the mayor of New York nor the Federal Radio Commission could take action against his demagoguery without committing the graver offense of "censorship." Here, of course, was a basic dilemma of radio as time was to prove over and over. The bigot invariably invokes free speech, the antidemocrat insists upon the rights of democracy, the law-flaunting Fascist relies on other people's respect for law.

Although the issue of free speech was of the highest importance to the future of American radio and of American democracy, there were incidents in the early years which seem now, in retrospect,

somewhat labored. Such was *l'affaire Coolidge* in 1927. It appears, incredible as it is to believe today, that political significance was read into the speech a fishing expert, one Fred B. Shaw, a member of the Izaak Walton League, proposed to broadcast in praise of worms instead of the traditional flies dear to troutmen. Calvin Coolidge was the country's most devoted user of worms and Shaw's paean was interpreted as a subtle plug for Coolidgeism. Worms were accordingly classified as controversial and Mr. Shaw was denied his opportunity to propagandize for them.

The most consistent charges of censorship in the 1920's involved the issue of prohibition. Radio stations actually feared to permit attacks on the Eighteenth Amendment. They credited the Anti-Saloon League with power enough in Washington to get their licenses revoked. Hence such "wets" as Senator James W. Wadsworth, Mrs. Charles H. Sabin, William G. McAdoo, Hudson Maxim and Heywood Broun all had complaints that they were censored by radio.

The "dry" influence was potent indeed. Even after repeal radio stations were jolted by the Federal Radio Commission which caused a press release to be issued on the subject. "Although the 18th amendment of the Constitution of the United States has been repealed by the 21st, and so far as the Federal Government is concerned there is no liquor prohibition, it is well known," the commission handout read, "that millions of listeners throughout the United States do not use intoxicating liquors and many children of both users and nonusers are part of the listening public. The Commission asks that broadcasters and advertisers bear this in mind."

This was a sufficiently broad hint but the commission did not let the matter rest with a hint. The press release went on to state more explicitly: "The Commission will designate for hearing the renewal applications of all stations unmindful of the foregoing."

Advertising practice was, of course, the focus of considerable criticism and during the thirties the networks became increasingly

strict. Columbia refused all laxatives, depilatories and deodorants and programs involving "unpleasant discussions of bodily functions, bodily symptoms or other matters which similarly infringe on good taste." NBC had a list of some eighty words that must not be used in commercial copy. "Stomach," "pregnancy," "blood," "phlegm," "hawk," "infection," "retch" were among them. All reputable broadcasters came to understand that ignorance was no excuse if they put unwarranted claims either of products or services on the air. Nor could they allow one advertiser in praising his own merchandise to imply that his competitor used inferior ingredients, slovenly workers or unfair tactics. Lotteries obviously were against the law and appeals for funds with the exceptions of the Red Cross and Infantile Paralysis Drives were not permitted.

The question of alleged bias in sponsored news commentaries began to agitate the American people after 1935. Certainly there was an astonishing contradiction in the "expert" interpretation of events in Europe and Asia and of their ultimate import to the United States. So great was the interest in the "prejudice pattern" of certain news commentators that propaganda analysts, social-science investigators, the various political parties and pressure groups began checking the very words and phrases used, the significant repetition of given points. Columbia, as a network, prohibited all commentators and limited its "analysts" largely to the information at hand. CBS thereby sought to avoid personal prophecy and ax grinding equally.

The nation divided sharply as to whether or not Father Coughlin was anti-Semitic. After one sensational program, John Shepard, III, said on behalf of the Colonial Network in New England: "We cannot agree with the comment that this broadcast is anti-Semitic or that it is designed to spread religious and racial hatred, and if we did so feel the broadcasts would be discontinued." *Broadcasting Magazine* commented: "But the tenor and context of his remarks were interpreted in many quarters as definitely anti-Semitic."

Democratic radio discussion, American style, proved excessively rough-and-tumble, and those who were shocked by the fierce passions of the Isolationists and the Interventionists sometimes cried out in dismay, "There ought to be a law—!" Actually the important thing was not "excess" but "balance." The American people were entitled to hear all the arguments and, on the whole, they did. Indeed the now-famous radio debate over lend-lease was conducted with a volume of verbiage seldom equaled. Whatever else was said by the partisans, they could hardly allege that radio had denied them access to the masses.

The Federal Communications Commission was fairly consistent in one respect. It shied away from anything smacking of "censorship" save in instances that seemed so clear as to admit of no two views. Thus the FCC did not hesitate to brand Norman Baker, a contemporary of "Doc" Brinkley, as "vulgar" and to characterize his language as "abusive," "vicious," and "offensive to the sensibilities of the public," and the commission felt justified in issuing a reprimand of the National Broadcasting Company for the Charley McCarthy program spoof (1937) on Adam and Eve as written by Arch Oboler and "sexed up" by Mae West.

If the several revised versions of the National Association of Broadcasters' code of fair-trade practices dealt in the beginning largely with issues of taste and advertising, the code's real complexity came with the "controversial issues" of the Hitler epoch. The radio industry defined controversy as any issue involving the welfare of the public as a whole and about which there existed discernible divided public opinion. Politics and campaigns for political office were, at an easy glance, controversial, but other cases were not so simply catalogued. Broadcasters took the position that their *modus operandi* was a reasonable one since in the majority of cases it was possible to identify spokesmen for and against public issues and to apportion time among them on a balanced basis. The essence of the latter-day philosophy in the industry was that controversial issues should be presented (a) as nonpaid broadcasts

and (b) in nondramatic form. Radiobroadcasting was not a common carrier and was not therefore forced to sell time or to give time on demand. The first test was the test of public interest and that called for the exercise of judgment by the broadcaster. There was no escaping the responsibility of somebody's deciding who would and who would not get on the air and in what circumstances.

The situation was especially difficult when war broke out in 1939. The trade association immediately decided that it was quite evident—hence not controversial—that America desired to remain neutral. There was, of course, a Neutrality Act upon the statute books at the time. However, it was recognized that there existed in the nation a wide divergence of views as to the proper methods through which American neutrality should be insured. The debate on the meaning and the methods of neutrality therefore became "controversial" and could be treated on the air only as a sustaining broadcast and in the form of a straight talk—speech, debate, symposium.

The code presently began to impinge upon the talks of Father Coughlin. In the fall of 1939 his advertising agency, Aircasters, Inc., of Detroit, addressed a letter to stations with which the priest was seeking renewals of time contracts promising the Coughlin talks would follow "a very patriotic trend in the form of a neutrality sermon." The talks would not conflict with the NAB Code, Aircasters, Inc., asserted, adding: "They will not attack any race or creed, but will keep the patriotic tenor of trying to keep America out of war."

The Broadcasters Code Committee ruled that Father Coughlin clearly proposed to discourse on the meaning and methods of neutrality and that these were controversial matters and hence acceptable only as a sustaining program, not as a commercial. This was tantamount to hamstringing the priest since he could not hope to secure a regular time period on most stations without paying for it, and he could not carry out his purposes unless he had regu-

larly scheduled periods. The Michigan cleric continued, but the number of his stations was drastically curtailed. In the summer of 1940 his advertising agency again failed to persuade stations to sell time in connection with the elections and Coughlin thereupon announced that he was withdrawing from radio altogether. It had ceased to serve his ends. He would concentrate upon his own magazine, *Social Justice*.

The NAB Code Committee had other difficult social problems in 1940. One was the Townsend Old Age Pension Plan, then a well-organized movement. It was decided that the Townsendites could advertise during the campaign, but that the ban against paid broadcasts for the Townsend Plan would prevail again once the campaign was over. This was in keeping with the industry's general practice of accommodating political speakers on a sustaining basis in between political campaigns, but charging them for time during the stumping period.

The radio etiquette of the national political campaign became fairly fixed during Roosevelt's time partly by official FCC definition and partly by trade interpretation. The President could speak, free, as much and as often as he wanted. On notification from the White House secretariat the networks, often all four of them simultaneously, cleared whatever commercial commitments they had for the talk. But once in a re-election campaign, the President resumed status as a candidate for office on a parity with all other candidates. Time was then allotted by negotiation of the parties with the respective network and all time was paid for precisely in the manner candidates paid for space in the newspapers.

Propaganda groups were rated on the specific circumstances. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was not permitted, under the NAB Code, to buy radio time since the broadcasters had banned hard liquor advertising at the insistence of the drys. The "proper" procedure on temperance discussions was via pro and con spokesmen on donated time.

America First Committee activities were originally classified as

"controversial" and hence reserved for free time. But, when the committee entered politics in advocacy of candidates pledged to their views, the committee was "cleared" as buyers of time.

However confusing these interpretations may have seemed on occasion, they did have the final effect of laying down increasingly firm rules of decency. John R. Brinkley, Bob Shuler, Huey Long, Judge Rutherford, Charles E. Coughlin belonged to a period of broadcasting that is closed. They had thrived on easygoing American tolerance for dissent and heterodoxy. Americans were loath to choke them off, even preferring a good deal of abuse of free speech as a price for retaining the fullest possible measure.

The doctrine that radio was not a medium of abuse or personal hobby riding has been strengthened consistently through the years, but only after some picturesque invective had been aired. One now-forgotten hero of the kilocycles spoke of a man he disliked as "a doggoned thievin', lying, plundering, doggoned corrupt crook," and added, "He's not fit for the penitentiary. He is the lowest of the low, the vilest of the vile, the dirtiest thievin' grafted that ever disgraced the school board." The radio eccentrics of the early twenties simply could not meet the test of public interest, convenience and necessity. Crackpots, demagogues and hatrioteers exposed and discredited themselves when forced to resort to reason and facts. Some of the worst blatherskites had the good sense to realize that they could never survive a radio debate, that to stand up before live microphones and accept questions from sharp-witted opponents was too great a risk. The clever rabble rouser, as Hitler well knew, surrounded himself with an ecstatic mob of yes men who screamed agreement on cue from a cheer leader. Never, never did the messianic "leader" expose himself or his ideas to rebuttal or challenge.

In four instances radio stations were extinguished by action of the government regulatory body on the question of abuse of privilege. Mention was made in Chapter Two of the revocation of the Milford, Kansas, license of the goat-gland wholesaler, John R.

Brinkley. Norman Baker survived longer but finally suffered a like fate. KVEP, Portland, Oregon, was silenced as a penalty for permitting a disappointed political candidate to "defame and malign" reputable citizens by innuendo and "direct use of indecent language." A fourth case involved one of Los Angeles' fiery personalities, the Reverend Bob Shuler. He combated the FCC and took an appeal to court action on the claim that he had been "censored." The court supported the commission's action, however, saying: "This is neither censorship nor previous restraint, nor is it a whittling away of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment." The decision went on to declare that the Los Angeles evangelist was free to

indulge his strictures upon the characters of men in public office. He may just as freely as ever criticize religious practices of which he does not approve. He may even indulge private malice or personal slander—subject, of course, to be required to answer the abuse thereof—but he may not, as we think, demand, of right, the continued use of an instrument of commerce for such purposes, or any other, except in subordination to all reasonable rules and regulations Congress, acting through the Commission, may prescribe.

Radiobroadcasting was clearly a business with a difference. The radio businessman needed to regard many factors ordinarily outside the necessary calculations of men of commerce. He had to apply simultaneously two tests of his activities—first, the question of sales and profits; second, the question of operation in the public interest, necessity and convenience. The dollar volume of a station or network was a precise and knowable thing. The public usefulness of programs, the social justification of the license to operate were matters of opinion.

Fan mail and pan mail from the listening public itself constituted one form of radio criticism. The outcries and threats of professional pressure groups were another. While often resisted by

broadcasters, and sometimes resented on the score of insincerity, the lobbies for special points of view nonetheless had a due effect, with American radio, as with American legislators.

Again and again broadcasters found themselves innocently entangled in other people's feuds. At one point during the mid-thirties the Mexican Travel Bureau, a Mexican government agency, sponsored a program of entertainment over NBC, the objective of which was to sell Americans on tourism south of the Rio Grande. This program in praise of the scenery, the sports and the romantic señoritas maddened certain Americans who were extremely piqued with the Mexican government just then. Following one broadcast a hullabaloo was raised that this had included an "obscene" song. Upon investigation the song in question proved to be ardent praise of love, but an old eleventh-century classic, and broadcast in its original archaic Spanish which hardly any Mexican, much less any American, could comprehend. The attempt to make something out of the incident was obviously farfetched and promptly collapsed. But the very farfetchedness proved anew the vulnerable position of radio. The attack was aimed at the Mexican government, but the mud was flung at an American radio network.

Radio stations were picketed for carrying—and for not carrying—Father Coughlin's talks. They benefited financially, and lost, by virtue of their sanction of the clergyman's strictures. During the neurotic thirties, radio businessmen found themselves the butt of abusive picketing by the partisans of various messiahs. In particular the broadcasters' racial and religious, family and political affiliations were "investigated."

Any broadcaster who had seen his own telephone switchboard light up during or after a broadcast and had heard indignant citizens scream their dissent, automatically acquired a healthy respect for this form of criticism, however prepared he was to discount the organized and manufactured protest of the professionals.

The newspapers took note of only the more conspicuous instances of public attacks on radio programs, and this in the form

Corner of a network music library





*Courtesy of George Sommer, Peoria*

Remote control interviewing on a farm

of news accounts. American newspapers published little or no serious, artistic or scholarly criticism of broadcast programs. Most of the four hundred-odd radio columns in the United States were reserved for press-agent gossip. The weeklies and monthlies turned their attention to radio from time to time but almost never on a regularly scheduled basis. Some of the magazine pieces had penetration and social astringency value. But most pieces were merely clever, intended only to amuse the magazine readers. Magazine critiques were usually one-sided and biased or frivolous and indifferent, with a hit-and-run quality. Neither the editor nor the writer proposed to stand and fight. Actually the high-brow wrote of radio programs from Olympus and for Olympians. It was the fashionable pose among the exquisites to smile at what they considered the incurable illiteracy and vulgarity of the newest of the "art" forms.

Broadcasters were not slow to discount the high-brows. Plainly there was no pleasing them. And the more the high-brows sounded off against radio programs, the clearer it became that they usually did not know what they were talking about. They repeatedly failed to focus the incident upon a given time and station. They could never recall what network, what station, what advertiser, what night. They drew few or no distinctions between programs or stations, but lumped all "radio" together. The absence of the comparative element in their testimony and their failure ever to encounter even a tidbit that pleased them, unless possibly it were Fred Allen, convinced the industry that high-brows just did not like and never would like radio. They argued on hearsay evidence, or on stray straws snatched from the wind in passing. One literary critic turned his attention to radio programs every second year. His practice was to set aside one day when he prowled the calibrator, pencil and pad in hand, on the quest for the quaint and the quotable. He did not turn to radio in the normal way for music or news or entertainment, but for magazine copy. He had no trouble in selling his stuff since the editor who bought it didn't

listen either, but thought that radio was the Peck's Bad Boy of popular media and needed periodically to be spanked on the courthouse steps.

Three trade papers devoted in whole or in part to broadcasting have published professional criticism of radio programs. These professional journals, *Variety*, *Billboard* and *Radio Daily*, have catered necessarily to the inner circle of the initiated. The quality of their criticism was distinctly uneven but on occasion healthily jolting to the complacency of program makers. Harry Ackerman of the advertising agency, Young & Rubicam, summed up their effect when he facetiously declared, "The radio critic is a species of animal popularly believed in professional circles to have a sub-normal brain, no heart and a large spleen."

So much for published criticism. It has played some part; it may play a bigger role in time to come. But neither fan mail, nor pressure groups, nor hit-and-run high-brows who never stand and defend their writings, nor trade-paper reviewers will ever have the leverage on broadcasters possessed by those seven 10,000-dollar-a-year men in Washington known as the Federal Communications Commission.

As a guarantee of free speech and free press, the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States prohibits Congress from passing any law the effect of which is to curtail either liberty. Congress was mindful of this fundamental when it set up the Federal Radio Commission in 1927 and its successor, the Federal Communications Commission, in 1934. A distinct warning was included in each act against commissioners becoming censors. And yet the very concept of operation in the public interest cannot be judged apart from program content. Program content is public interest. The editor must select and the editor must reject, and his judgment in both respects forms his case before the bar of public opinion and before the FCC.

The whole question of censorship in the United States is conditioned by legalisms, semantics and evasions. There is, of course, a

good deal of censorship in ordinary everyday practice. There are whole areas of self-expression which are automatically outside the pale—pornography for one, incitement to riot for another. Seven states, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia, Kansas and Massachusetts maintain boards of censorship for moving pictures despite filmdom's own self-policing through the Hays-Johnston office. The city of Boston operates censorship of practically anything that meets the disapproving eye of the municipality—plays, movies, novels, art exhibits. Hollywood itself is under the shadow not only of an infinite complex of state, municipal, religious and racial *verbotens* of American origin but also must meet the censorship of foreign nations, some of whom actually assign consuls to deal with the film makers.

Radio shares with films the benefits and the responsibilities of mass circulation. The legitimate dramatic and musical theater has a scope and a sanction not permitted either the broadcast program or the screen show. This is partly a matter of children in the audience, but not altogether. The “sophisticated” media of self-expression, stage, ballet, novels, painting, etc., flourish either in the large and indulgent metropolitan centers or they deal with their audiences on an individualized basis. Radio and movies on the contrary are exposed in every town, village and hamlet to the family groups and are judged in terms of family morality and aesthetic taste. Censorship is always implicit and sometimes explicit. Birth control, to instance an actual theme, is just not going to be treated by either medium—at least not for a long time to come.

Censorship is, of course, relative. Certain forms of censorship are repeated day after day without any real public distress. Hardly anybody complained when the FRC barred “fortunetelling in any form,” for that sort of thing was in general disrepute and nearly all radio stations had already established a similar prohibition on their own. It’s not censorship but honesty which spurns advertisers desiring to broadcast “false, fraudulent or misleading statements.” In theory if not always in practice everybody accepts tolerance and

will therefore not dispute a regulation that outlaws attacks upon other people's religions and racial antecedents. Nobody is allowed to cry, "Fire!" in a crowded theater because the catastrophe of mass stampede is well known. Similarly nobody is allowed to incite to pogrom or pillage on the radio. The nature of radio is particularly susceptible to dissemination of wild rumor and inflammatory material and must be guarded all the more carefully on that account.

It is not censorship but a practical measure against censorship when the FCC rules that radio stations must grant equal opportunities to all sides in political and controversial discussions. Some Americans have grimaced at the application of this rule, for it assures a certain access to the microphone of Communists and Socialists, but the rule is generally regarded as sound. The essence of free speech obviously entails precisely this—the right of the unpopular ideology to be promulgated. It is an indefensibly smug attitude to assert that nobody may criticize the "American Way of Life" save at the risk of being charged with treason, sabotage and with plotting the overthrow of the government.

On more than one occasion the FCC has stubbed its collective toe in attempting to appease private citizens. Eugene O'Neill's stage play *Beyond the Horizon* was broadcast in radio adaptation by the Blue network. A man and wife in Minnesota wrote to the FCC to complain that the dialogue included profane expressions. The FCC never revealed the identity of the complainants but on their single unsupported letter some ten local stations which had carried *Beyond the Horizon* were cited and ordered to prepare a defense of their action. Their defense obviously was that Eugene O'Neill is one of America's great dramatists, that his plays are highly regarded and regularly studied as literature in the colleges of the nation and that the mysterious Minnesotans were extraordinarily sensitive busybodies. So adverse was the newspaper editorial comment in this matter that the FCC quietly forgot about the whole thing.

The pros and cons of censorship go on forever in all art forms and in all countries. America's own penchant for reform being strong, impatient men of good will are capable of buying a show of progress at the expense of a basic principle. Of course it is difficult to find the truth in the smoke screens generated on both sides. The whole question is truly recognized as vital to the survival and health of democracy, and perhaps nothing is so much to be desired as continued and constant public discussion of censorship.

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## CHAPTER VII

# RULES AND REGULATIONS

**I**T is the plausible contention of radio attorneys that Congress has never legislated for radio either in good time or in good logic. The obviously inadequate wireless-telegraph regulations of 1912 were stretched from 1920 to 1927 to cover radiobroadcasting. Finally the five-man Federal Radio Commission was set up in 1927. Then in 1934 Congress amended the radio laws again and created the seven-man Federal Communications Commission.

Broadcasters demanded regulation and prodded the government into providing it. Throughout the industry memory or legend of the horrors of the mid-twenties is enough to convince broadcasters that some form of official supervision of operating standards is essential and the latter-day antagonism between government and industry is seldom concerned with technicalities or engineering. The argument nearly always revolves upon an issue of program content.

As many observers read the Act of 1934 its great mistake reposed in the grouping of broadcasting, an advertising medium and art form, with public utilities like telegraph and telephone which were also brought under the FCC. The consequent disposition of the White House to bring in state public-utilities regulators to serve on the commission has resulted in broadcasters facing men whose whole approach is special and singular. The broadcaster and his attorney argue that radio is an advertising medium, an art, a competitive service, and not a public utility, and that under cover of loosely drawn legislation a social concept without sanction in public opinion is being subtly and progressively fastened on them. But to the charge of "caprice" and "arbitrary fiat" the commission and

its friends fling back the counteraccusation of "distortion" and "misrepresentation." It comes down perhaps to a choice between a classical and a modern interpretation of judicial review. The core of the broadcasters' complaint has been that the FCC sits in review of its own decisions; it is lawgiver, law interpreter, law enforcer. Appeals to the courts are costly and of doubtful worth, for the FCC usually wins in the final reckoning even though the District of Columbia Court of Appeals did, in one instance, order the FCC to provide "a succinct statement of facts and grounds therefore, since necessarily in every case the Commission will know why it is deciding as it is." Radio litigants have contended that the FCC acts and then decides on a suitable explanation.

The basic law is sufficiently explicit up to a point. The commission may refuse to grant a license or a renewal of a license on the ground of failure to comply with its own regulations and standards. More than that, violation of FCC standards is a criminal offense subject to a fine of \$500 for each day of violation. As for anybody who dares attempt unlicensed broadcasting, obviously an absurdity, the penalty can be two years' imprisonment and a fine of \$10,000.

A station license, once granted, is revocable at the discretion of the commission and must be renewed in any event every three years. Previously the license ran only six months, but broadcasters complained so bitterly of this burden on business planning that the term was gradually lengthened. The most significant economic fact of the license, however, reposes in the commission's dictum: "The station license shall not vest in the licensee any right to operate the station nor any right in the use of the frequencies designated in the license beyond the term thereof nor in any manner other than authorized therein." Translated into everyday business language this means that the station has no legal right to occupy its wavelength beyond the three-year period and no guarantee of continuing existence. License renewals are usually granted, but they are based on a "presumption" (in the absence of contrary

findings) that the renewal serves the public interest and not on any real or implied property right.

The station may be ordered to move to another wavelength, change its hours or power, add an expensive directional antenna to shield other stations and in general to conform with regulations designed for the common good rather than the station's own private business convenience. Scores of American stations had a moving day enforced upon them after the United States signed the Havana Treaty in 1938. Stations of all nations have to be accommodated to some 106 air lanes and a system of North American priorities on these wavelengths had been worked out at Havana by the United States, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

American broadcasters are likely to reveal in conversation a vast accumulated lore about the FCC, its rules and practices, its personnel and their attitudes toward business, public interest, controversy, this senator or that congressman. The radio businessman in the course of his affairs makes many and expensive trips to Washington. A home-town engineer or lawyer will usually not suffice. It is desirable to have a consulting engineer or a consulting attorney on the spot in Washington. Dealings with the FCC are not for the amateur.

The Federal Communications Commission is a member of the family of "miniature independent governments" which flourish outside the usual legislative-executive-judiciary divisions of the Federal Government proper. Congress devised the Interstate Commerce Commission, the model, in 1887 and has since created a good many other "licensing" and "regulating" agencies of the same kind, notably the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Reserve Board, the United States Tariff Commission, the United States Maritime Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Power Commission.

The bulk of the FCC's standards refers to technicalities. These are scientific, reasonable and generally admired despite any hard-

ships or costs imposed on the broadcasters. There was little or no sympathy in the early thirties for a number of absent-minded managements which were put out of business because of persistent failure to conform with technical requirements. When it came to assigning stations on a geographic basis, however, complaints arose. Broadcasters felt that there was grave injustice done by the old Federal Radio Commission in the case of WIBO, Chicago, which was abolished in 1932 despite public protest and a plausible record of public interest in order to give over its wavelength to a station located only a few miles away but technically in Indiana, a station which has ever since operated substantially as a "Chicago district station."

Radio stations from time to time were sold and this introduced the question of value. Since by FCC enactment no management could acquire or build up a vested interest in its wavelength the sale of a station represented an economic anomaly. At its extreme the "bare bones evaluation" argument would have limited the sales price of a station to the physical worth of its transmitter, studios and plant. And yet the true worth of the station, business-wise, was its license, good will, network membership and going-concern status. The significant business fact, of course, is that the FCC's approval of any station sale is an absolute legal requirement.

Another business right of considerable significance was highlighted when petitions were filed by stations desiring to transfer from one city to another city. The station licensed to serve the public interest in a given community now wished to forsake the community and move elsewhere. There were instances where the transfer would leave the first city without a radio station while adding one more station to a city already possessing three or four. The motive of management, a better chance for business success, seemed to conflict head-on with the ideal of social expediency. Under FCC rules this came under the heading of "application for modification of license" which with "application for the Commission's consent to a transfer of a corporation holding license" repre-

sented the more involved economic and political facets of the licensing system. The buying and selling of radio stations, their transfer from city to city or state to state suggested, to some minds, a dubious "trafficking in wavelengths."

The first step of the would-be radiobroadcaster is an application to the commission for a construction permit. When granted, a "CP" amounts to a preliminary license which is later confirmed by an actual license when the station, duly erected, is in a position to assume the responsibilities of broadcasting. Application to the FCC is made on a printed form which questions the would-be broadcaster in minute detail as to his citizenship, character, background, business, technical, educational and personal fitness to operate a radio station. Information as to program policies of the proposed station in the light of the community to be served must be included.

The application is examined by the engineering and legal departments of the commission to see that it is, on its face, properly presented and manifestly within the requirements of the law. Once the application is set for hearing, other stations which may be adversely affected have an opportunity to testify. The old stations which oppose a new station base their arguments upon public interest which they assert will not be served. In short, the interveners argue in contradiction to the very claim of public interest which the hopeful promoters of the new station make.

FCC hearings resemble court proceedings except that there is no jury. Witnesses are heard and cross-examined. Any interested party may, subject to certain procedural rules, be heard either in person or by attorney. The attorney must first have been admitted to practice before the commission although out-of-towners are sometimes, as a courtesy, allowed to represent clients without belonging to the FCC Bar.

Many of the economic issues debated before the commission are basic to the socio-political philosophies of our times. One running debate for example has concerned the social implications of some

two hundred radio stations being operated by newspapers. The force of this argument was considerably weakened when Franklin D. Roosevelt won four successive elections against the opposition of the American press. The commission finally clarified its thinking in the matter of two or more stations being under one management in a given market. It was ruled that no licensee could have two stations in one community. This ruling compelled a number of owners to seek buyers for their second station.

The commission compelled NBC to dispose of its second network and has moved in the direction of limiting the number of local stations which any network may own in its own name. There is, however, no prohibition on a partnership or business having a scattering of licenses. Hence the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* has stations in Cleveland, Akron and Columbus and a minority interest in WKBN, Youngstown. The Cowles Brothers, who own Des Moines newspapers and the magazine *Look*, control radio stations in Des Moines, Yankton, North Dakota, Washington, Jersey City and Boston. Scripps-Howard is licensed to operate in Cincinnati, Knoxville, and Memphis. Hearst Radio, Inc., means WCAE, Pittsburgh, WISN, Milwaukee, and WINS, New York. George B. Storer and John H. Ryan control three Ohio stations, two in West Virginia, one in Georgia, one in Florida, and a piece of KIRO, Seattle. The General Tire & Rubber Company bought out the five stations of the Yankee Network in New England. Colonel Harry C. Wilder has spread out from his native Syracuse where he established WSYR to acquire WTRY, Troy, and WELI, New Haven.

Other group ownerships and the number of stations licensed to them are as follows: Don Lee, California, five; Gannett Newspapers, New York, seven; Georgia Broadcasting System, three; Gene A. Howe, T. E. Showden, Texas, four; John A. Kennedy, West Virginia, four; Pierce E. Lackey, Kentucky, three; Clarence and Martin Leich, Indiana, three; McClatchey Newspapers, California, Nevada, five; McClung, California, three; Morgan Murphy-Walter C. Bridges, Minnesota, four; J. Lindsay & Gilmore

Nunn, Kentucky, Texas, Tennessee, four; Oklahoma Publishing, Oklahoma, Colorado, three; George A. Richards Associates, Detroit, Cleveland, Beverly Hills, three; John Perry, Florida, four; Adeline B. Rines, Maine, three; J. Hale & John F. Steinman, Pennsylvania, five; Symons-Craney, Oregon, Washington, Montana, five; Edward A. and Philip P. Allen, Virginia, three; Westinghouse, Boston, Springfield, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, Portland, Oregon, six.

No station—let the point be reiterated, for it is the key fact of the broadcasting business—can be sold or moved or shut down or modified as to operating hours and operating equipment without the express permission of the FCC. Each must reapply every three years for a renewal of license and all were originally granted on a representation of honest intent to operate in the public interest, which does not mean for profit alone or for business convenience alone and never for personal political preference. Over every station—through the right of license—the FCC holds in perpetuity the threat of extinction. Small wonder therefore if broadcasters are, as a child toward its father, often ambivalent, for the FCC, like the parent, is the source both of favor and punishment, satisfaction or anxiety.

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## CHAPTER VIII

# SMALL TOWN, MEDIUM TOWN, BIG TOWN

**T**HE "typically American" aspect of American broadcasting is the existence of home-town stations in which program policy is largely determined at the Main Street level. Over one-third of the stations in the United States have no connections with a network. They derive neither color nor support from the big production centers save as it reaches them through recorded programs.

About thirty American stations are owned by schools and universities, which represent a sadly decimated group once numbering over two hundred. Most of the "educational" stations expired from lack of cash, imagination and will to live. Neither the college administration nor the faculty could carry on. Often indeed the pedagogues were scornful of the medium. High-school students kept alive a station in Buffalo, New York, for twelve years in the face of a fairly consistent attitude of disinterest by the municipal school board. Those educational stations which have survived are intelligently operated models of their kind. The University of Wisconsin, the University of Minnesota, Iowa State, Ohio State and St. Lawrence are especially notable.

Various religious groups continue to operate radio stations. The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago is an instance in illustration. WJAX is owned by the city of Jacksonville, Florida. WSUN is similarly licensed to the municipality in Tampa. The city of Dallas controls WRR and the city of New York maintains WNYC. The first three accept advertising, WNYC does not. At least one station, WCFL, is licensed to a unit of organized labor, the Chicago Federation of Labor.

Considered as a business, a local radio station in a small town varies from life on the edge of poverty to a very snug nesting. It depends on the town, the people, the economic, cultural and geographic elements and on the brains and initiative of management. Local radio runs from thirty-word announcements for twenty-five cents each (in a Texas cow town) to \$1,400 an hour (in Manhattan), and from phonograph records to philharmonic orchestras. The engineering installation cost for a new local 100-watt station setup, ready to operate, was around \$18,000 before the war. For a 50,000-watt station (no licenses obtainable) the cost would be at least \$250,000.

No local radio situation is exactly like any other and the examples here chosen are both typical in some particulars and non-typical in others. Our small-town example is Green Bay, Wisconsin. Our medium-town case history is Denver, Colorado. Finally our big-town is New York City itself.

First as to Green Bay, Wisconsin. It is unique in the year of its founding, 1638. Father Marquette and his hardy French voyageurs came down that side of Lake Michigan. When the town was three hundred years old, in 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt paid it an honor visit. He found a population of 50,000 comprising Belgians, English, Germans, French, Bohemians, a few Italians and perhaps a dozen Negroes.

Green Bay is a trading center but with a difference. It has farming, industry, Great Lakes shipping and a famous championship team of professional football players. Green Bay handles a lot of coal and wood pulp. The harbor is fifty feet deep but landlocked and seventy-five miles in from the lake itself. A ferry runs across to Ludington, Michigan. The near-by village of Plymouth claims to be the premier cheese market not of Wisconsin only but of the world. Three railroads run into Green Bay.

The radio station in Green Bay is WTAQ with 5,000 watts and it is owned by the St. Norbertine Fathers, a Belgian Catholic order. These worthy "White Fathers" are entirely self-supporting.

They are excellent businessmen and enjoy gilt-edge credit rating. They bought WTAQ from the Gillette Tire & Rubber Company in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and moved the station to Green Bay, affiliating it with the Columbia Broadcasting System. The order operates a liberal-arts college, St. Norbertine, in the outskirts of the town and has an enrollment of about five hundred students. They own Rockwood Lodge, for private dinner parties, and various other real estate. They also own Station WHBY, a 250-watter in Appleton, thirty miles from Green Bay. This is one of America's oldest stations, dating back to 1921. Father James A. Wagner secured the license by mail from Herbert Hoover. This priest acts as managing director of the two stations but he employs as station manager, on salary and percentage, a clever and hard-working young Protestant, Haydn Evans, who once owned the "Pot o' Gold" program on the NBC network.

The WTAQ program schedule is strictly tailored to the specifications of the area. There's a local "Farm and Home Hour" at noontime seven days a week. This includes a seven-piece Farm-hand Orchestra which specializes in polkas, schottisches and waltzes. The show has a popularity rating of twenty, astonishing for a daytime show of any sort. A remote studio at the stockyards in Milwaukee, 108 miles south, provides a five-minute cut-in of current market reports during the Farm and Home Hour. Eddie Jason is master of ceremonies of the program and strives for a jovial, corny approach, spoofing visitors, musicians and announcers. The orchestra plays dances at nights, publicized as "direct from WTAQ" and booked at \$100 per night, higher than most local dance orchestras can get.

"Uncle Louis and the Town Hall Players" is a group of WTAQ actors headed by Leo Reeths who thrive on a seven-day routine that calls for them to perform every morning over the air and do a different one-night theatrical appearance in the surrounding countryside every night. Their radio stint is completed by 7:30 A. M. The members of the troupe then sleep from eight in the

morning until three in the afternoon. Late afternoon is reserved for rehearsals, business and the motor trip in a station wagon to the crossroads hall they're playing that night. The company rotates among about twenty-five different spots, plays to from 300 to 1,000 patrons every night at forty cents a head in normal times. Their stage play runs two hours from 8:30 to 10:30 and is followed by a two-hour dance after the seats are cleared away. The significant thing is that the radio appearances of Reeths and Company represent an even-Stephen trade. WTAQ gets the actors free, the actors get the radio publicity free, which assures them attendance at their theatrical dates.

Programs of the CBS network take up about seventy-five percent of WTAQ's time. The New York Philharmonic is very popular in the area because of the European cultural antecedents of so many of the citizens. WTAQ also broadcasts once a week a music-appreciation talk by the county music instructor with all pupils listening en masse by prearrangement. This is in addition to the CBS series, "American School of the Air."

The St. Norbertine Chapel broadcasts High Mass on WTAQ every Sunday. Otherwise the order makes little use of the station for its own purposes. On Sunday evening they donate a half-hour to the Brown County Ministerial Association.

WTAQ has a staff program director, two producers, three writers, a musical conductor, fifteen musicians, an educational director, publicity director, six engineers, six announcers, including one woman. It has a radio studio seating fifty persons and an auditorium controlled by the station accommodating 2,000. Hard-liquor advertising is limited to time periods after 10:00 p.m. and mention of the brand name and the manufacturer only is permitted. No "sell." The station's basic rate is \$140 an hour.

Medium-town Denver is neither a polyglot, proletarian, highly unionized industrial center nor yet simply a farmers' and miners' trading post. Denver is an in-between sort of American com-

munity, the eastern extremity of the West, the western extremity of the East. Built on flat prairie, the city stands in sight of towering mountains. It is high and dry in Denver but civic pride and abundant artificial watering keep its streets and parks well treed and its lawns green and neat. A state capital, a tourist's mecca, a health resort, Denver has made mining, railroading and journalistic history. The city has a Federal mint and a miniature Wall Street. The consuls of foreign nations are resident in Denver, notably British and Mexican, and all in all the municipality is one of the most colorful among American home towns.

Some Denverites are rich, traveled and urbane. They live in imposing châteaux and entertain lavishly. Their country-club life is chic. They are in marked contrast to other Denverites who wear denim jeans and seek rapture through the various nondescript religious cults which remind the visitor forcibly of Los Angeles.

The cultural life of Denver is unexceptional, probably inferior to both Salt Lake City and Des Moines. There are oil paintings on exhibition and a museum contains stupendous skeletons of dinosaurs which once inhabited the area. There is a well-attended series of recitals during the winter. All the theaters in Denver are devoted exclusively to the cinema save one that presents small-time musical tabloids out of Chicago. In the summertime, however, at Elitch's Amusement Gardens there still flourishes, as it has since 1899, a warm-weather dramatic stock company.

Cowboys appear in Denver now and then, their high-heeled effeminate boots resounding oddly on the city pavements. Quaint bearded old prospectors come in from the gullies. Lung cases are forever arriving. Denver has streamline train connections and frequent airplane departures. It is a military aviation zone. Tourists fill the hotels, support the sight-seeing services, buy up souvenirs and knicknacks wholesale. And yet with all the travel that passes through Denver its hotels are too few, too old and too crowded. It has a few good restaurants and a great many bad ones. The fire department is regarded as a model of efficiency. The parks are

extensive and well maintained. Outwardly Denver is decorative and decorous. Inwardly it is an insular, self-preoccupied, heavy-drinking and loud-praying town.

It has been said that the capital of Colorado is neither international, industrious nor intellectual. Certainly Denver is far less concerned with foreign affairs than is sober and convert-eager Salt Lake City. Denver is overwhelmingly "local-minded." As one citizen explained the parochial attitude, "a dogfight on Champa Street is more interesting to Denverites than the assassination of a king in Europe."

How then did local radio develop in this city of Denver with its mixture of the familiar and the special? Did radio fall into the control of the established families? Did radio change Denver and in what respect?

The established families seem to have been too conservative in their tastes, too slow to grow enthusiastic. Denver stations were the creations of outside capital or of men new to Denver and of no previous economic distinction. The potent Frederick Bonfils, publisher of the *Denver Post*, watched a succession of radio stations set up shop and apparently saw no reason to be either interested or bothered. He contemptuously waved aside an early opportunity to purchase Station KLZ. Nor could it have endeared radio to Bonfils that a certain young Irish-American salesman named Eugene O'Fallon became the licensee of KFEL. Bonfils in his grandeur and O'Fallon in his hustling ambition seem to have crossed now and again, with a mutually shared business antipathy.

A dentist from Minneapolis, William D. Reynolds, who had moved to Colorado Springs for his son's health, became one of the pioneers in Denver radio. The dentist played the saxophone and his wife Naomi, the piano; but in addition to their musical interests they doted on crystal sets. They had a radio workshop in their garage at Colorado Springs and here, between dental appointments, Dr. Reynolds used to putter around building sets. Ultimately the dentist and his wife moved to Denver and opened a

store to sell radio parts. Thinking it would be even more fun to tinker with a radio transmitter, the Reynolds applied to Washington for a license and got one through the Department of Commerce. This station was KLZ.

The "studio" of the original KLZ was the front porch of the Reynolds residence on South Marion Avenue in Denver. The transmitter was in the back yard. They went on the air in the morning to read weather and stock-market reports and similar information. Then the station was silent until nightfall. What the Reynolds broadcast any evening depended on who dropped by. In the summertime when guests were entertained on the lawn, they would open up the transmitter, and group singing, instrumental music, recitations—whatever informal talent was available—would constitute the program schedule. When the guests or the hosts got tired the party and the broadcast would end.

These impromptu programs made friends throughout the Denver and surrounding Colorado area. Business improved at the Reynolds radio-parts store downtown. A publicity swap was finally negotiated with the Shirley-Savoy Hotel in the business district, and KLZ's transmitter towers were set up on the roof of the hotel. The Reynoldses then ordered an elaborate organ to be purchased through time payments but did not anticipate its arrival with freight and installation charges amounting to \$2,500, a purely fanciful sum at the time. A wholesale grocer named Frederick W. Meyer was thereupon persuaded to take a one-third interest in KLZ for the \$2,500 necessary for the delivery of the fancy studio organ. From this original cash investment of \$2,500, "Bill" Meyer some twelve years later is reputed to have derived a \$100,000 net profit.

But the problem of finding revenue to maintain KLZ remained acute for some years. Politicians bought time for cash, but electioneering didn't last forever. A "dance marathon" at Rainbow Gardens at one point provided KLZ with a source of much-needed pelf. Three times a day the station broadcast eyewitness descrip-

tions of the morbid spectacle of couples trying to stay awake day after day while going through the motions of non-stop "dancing." The broadcasts attracted crowds of people to the dance hall and each night it was Bill Meyer's assigned task to count the house and collect KLZ's share of the receipts. After so many people had paid to come in, all additional admissions belonged to KLZ. This was paid to Meyer, usually in silver and seldom in bills.

Presently KLZ was prosperous enough to pay off its accumulated debts and back salaries, but then, to quote Bill Meyer, "a smart Western Electric salesman came along and sold us a \$25,000 transmitter and KLZ was back in debt again."

Meyer is essentially a salesman, and a good one. He is hard-headed, down to cases, intent upon the things that translate into dollars. He was in charge at KLZ at the time he applied, in his own name, for a license for a brand-new station on February 17, 1938. He requested 250 watts daytime, 100 watts nighttime, on 1340 kilocycles. A hearing was held in Washington on May 24, as a result of which the FCC examiner reported in favor of Meyer's application on August 16, but on the following May 16, 1939, the Federal Communications Commission rejected its examiner's recommendation and denied the application. Within two months Meyer filed for a rehearing and on November 15, twenty months after the original request, the FCC reversed itself and Meyer had authority to erect and operate KMYR. The cost of establishing the station, as stated in the official record, was to be \$18,320, and to operate it would require, Meyer testified, \$3,727 per month. Of this sum \$1,972 would go for payroll, \$600 for other talent, \$300 for discs and transcriptions, \$300 for news service, \$175 for performance fees to the American Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers, and \$150 for repairs.

Incorporated in Meyer's petition to the FCC was an analysis, from his own data, of Denver radio conditions. According to Meyer, KLZ's schedule included thirty-nine percent of CBS network programs and less than twenty percent transcriptions. It

broke down as 70.8 entertainment, 13.4 educational, 1.86 religious, 3.48 agricultural, 10.8 news. Of 121 hours of broadcasting in a sample week KOA, the NBC station, had, Meyer asserted, 55½ hours of local origins. By these facts and figures Meyer was arguing Denver's need for "more local service." He claimed that a recent rise in advertising rates at KLZ had caused over fifty business firms in Denver to discontinue using the station. Meyer cited 4,194 retail establishments grossing \$106,553,000 annually and thought that with "only" fourteen radio stations in the state of Colorado at the time the area was underserviced. He got his license from the FCC despite the more or less united opposition of all the stations operating in Denver who contended otherwise. The FCC apparently agreed at the outset that the proposed station had inadequate justification. Later, presented with additional data, the FCC reversed its attitude. A less persistent and knowledgeable petitioner than F. W. Meyer might never have succeeded in turning defeat into victory.

Another Denver station, KOA, now operated by NBC, went on the air December 15, 1924. It is regarded in Denver as the direct spiritual descendant of an amateur license originally held by William "Pop" Smith, then dean of the amateurs in the region, whose operator was Duncan Pyle, present owner of KVOD. Before World War I, "Pop" Smith gave time signals and weather reports in Morse code very slowly for other hams. All amateurs were silenced by the United States government during World War I, but afterward Smith resumed and added mining information to his service. The questionnaires sent him to be filled in for the Department of Commerce annoyed "Pop" Smith, according to some old-timers. Others think he doubted his own ability to qualify. Anyhow, he forswore his chance and KOA eventually appeared in Denver under the ownership of General Electric. This corporation dispatched Robert Owen from its Station WGY in Schenectady to "set up" KOA. Owen never returned to Schenectady but stayed to become a Denverite.

Duncan Pyle's whole adult business life has been spent in radio. He launched WDP (DP for Duncan Pyle) in 1920. This became KDZQ and was purchased by a Hal Nichols and moved to Long Beach, California. In 1922 Pyle acquired KFFQ in Colorado Springs, rebuilt it and in 1925 retitled it KFUM. A year later he moved back to Denver and again had new call letters, KFXF. This particular alphabetical combination proved extraordinarily hard for the public to fix in mind and was apt to come out all jumbled. Disgusted, Pyle went to Washington in 1930 and secured permission to use his present designation of KVOD. The station is owned chiefly by Pyle and Thomas C. Ekrem, with a few other small stockholders.

Pyle has the long memory and disputatious-as-to-dates tendency of the old-timer in radio. When he set up shop originally, commercialism was banned, all local stations were "experimental" on the one wavelength, 360 meters. He has the old-timer's scorn for the claims of WWJ, Detroit, or of KDKA, Pittsburgh, to be credited as the first. He asserts that there were at least twenty forerunners.

Pyle, like Reynolds the dentist, once operated a radio-parts store in Denver. Actually his first interest in wireless was as a lad in 1902 and as early as 1910 he and his lifelong friend and business associate, Tom Ekrem, formed the Colorado Radio Association for amateurs.

Pyle operates his present 5,000-watt station on a strictly nonflossy basis. He carries a lot of government and public-interest messages. The entertainment is mostly phonograph recordings and transcriptions when he is not on the network (ABC) but, where opportunity presents itself, KVOD corrals visiting celebrities for interviews and otherwise seeks to inject local novelty items in the program schedule. His social conscience expresses itself by not accepting hard-liquor advertising at all and beer advertising only "after the children have gone to bed." He will not permit night-club advertising or programs on the reasoning that simple folk would patronize

the clubs because of their confidence in radio and that once inside they might be "overcharged and pushed around," as Pyle once was on West Fifty-second Street in New York. KVOD donated radio time to Jehovah's Witnesses, the Brooklyn religious cult, until Pyle accidentally found out the Witnesses were paying KLZ for time. Thereupon Pyle canceled his gift of time even though the Witnesses threatened to sue him for what they called "their right." In its turn KLZ finally refused to sell further time to Jehovah's Witnesses because of the attack of their leader, Judge Rutherford, on Catholics, Protestants and Jews indiscriminately.

One of six radio stations operating in the city of Denver is KPOF (POF for "Pillar of Fire"), and its time is wholly pre-empted for religious broadcasting on behalf of the aggressively proselyting evangelical movement of that name. KPOF is on the air five and a half hours a day, sharing time with KFKA, the Greeley College station over the mountains from Denver. Its programming comprises sermons and hymn sings and religious playlets. As a patriotic gesture during World War II, KPOF scheduled a good deal of material from the Office of War Information but edited out "merely frivolous" material, according to the Reverend Arthur K. White, the son of Bishop Alma White, matriarchal founder-leader of the Pillar of Fire movement. The son explained that the movement is essentially "conservative" and disapproves of moving pictures, as such, and hence would not favor OWI material utilizing screen stars. KPOF is politically neutral, but "Wendell Willkie lost caste with the Pillar of Fire movement when he visited Russia."

Here then, in summary, is the line-up of stations serving Denver and the salient business facts concerning them.

KOA, founded 1924, now 50,000 watts, 850 kilocycles, originally licensed in the name of General Electric, operated by NBC; local management conforms with standards set or approved by NBC in New York. Station has facilities for invited audiences, 325 persons in Studio A, 150 persons in Studio B, and calls its fairly elaborate building in the heart of town "Denver's Own Radio City." New

York sales representative: NBC. Highest advertising rate per hour: \$320.

KLZ, founded 1920, now 5,000 watts, 560 kilocycles, originally licensed in the name of W. D. Reynolds, now licensed to Oklahoma Publishing Company, who also control WKY, Oklahoma City, and KVOR, Colorado Springs. Occupies basement of the Shirley-Savoy Hotel. Affiliated with CBS. New York sales representative: Eugene Katz. Highest advertising rate per hour: \$225.

KFEL, founded 1923, 5,000 watts, 950 kilocycles, licensed in the name of Eugene P. O'Fallon, Inc. Wholly dominated in practice by personality of Gene O'Fallon. Business headquarters in Albany Hotel decorated with Navajo Indian motif. Affiliated with Mutual. New York sales representative: John Blair & Co. Highest advertising rate per hour: \$200.

KVOD, founded 1925 under different call letters at Colorado Springs, now 5,000 watts, 630 kilocycles. William Duncan Pyle and Thomas C. Ekrem, purely local, dominate business. Affiliated with American (formerly Blue) network. New York sales representative: Edward Petry. Highest advertising rate per hour: \$200.

KPOF, founded 1928, 1,000 watts, 910 kilocycles (shares time with KFKA, Greeley, Colo.). Church-owned station devotes entire time to religious broadcasting. Does not sell advertising.

KMYR, founded 1940, 250 watts daytime, 100 watts nighttime, 1340 kilocycles. Licensed to F. W. Meyer, former executive and onetime part owner of KLZ. Operates without network affiliation of any kind. Follows a business policy of news every hour on the hour, lots of sports, phonograph records, stunts and spot announcements. Dominated by two Meyer Brothers, the one as president and the other as sales manager. New York sales representative: Wm. G. Rambeau. Highest advertising rate per hour: \$80.

Of course none of this information can be read in a vacuum. Personalities play a prominent part. There are degrees of skill and

imagination in station management. In Denver as in most competitive situations brains and enterprise often offset mere bigness and physical advantage. Nor is the element of personal pique and animosity lacking. Through the years there has been lots of horse trading in Denver radio and considerable realignment of loyalties and self-interest. Some Denver radiomen speak to each other only when stark necessity demands it.

KOA, owned by NBC, has as general manager Lloyd Yoder, once an all-American footballer for Carnegie Tech. The commercial manager is James MacPherson, who ran the station while Yoder served as a lieutenant commander in the Navy. Like many another Denver businessman MacPherson originally moved west for his health and stayed to send down local roots. He is a colorful personality, a hard worker and a veteran of World War I. His wife, a former singer, is active in promoting musical and cultural events in Denver. KOA's veteran program director is Clarence Moore. He is large, jovial, booming-voiced, program-wise and popular. Probably he is very much like long-established program directors in a great many American cities. By dint of arranging broadcasts all over the territory and because he often does a turn of announcing or acts as master of ceremonies, everybody seems to know him. As he walks about the streets of Denver or boards a streetcar or goes into a bank or a restaurant or a store he is almost certain to be greeted as both chum and celebrity. His nickname "Cul" is derived from the fact that he was once cadet major at Culver Military Academy before he became a church baritone, a hardware salesman and ultimately a radio announcer. His wife is a lay leader in the Episcopal Church of the intermountain West.

KLZ, still in the Shirley-Savoy Hotel but now an incisively efficient and dividend-producing operation under the general management of Hugh Terry, a former radio-time salesman, is, with KOA, the local embodiment of the "big-time" radio manner. That is to say, KLZ goes in for live-talent programming. It employs staff writers and directors. It wins national prizes for program building,

notably for documentary programs based on Denver's own picturesque past.

Rockefeller Foundation funds and Robert Hudson's enterprise developed in Denver one of the most remarkable innovations in American broadcasting, the so-called Rocky Mountain Radio Council. Serving the states of Colorado and Wyoming, the Council includes in its membership about twenty colleges and universities and a like number of local radio stations. Offices and program-recording studios were established in downtown Denver and in due course the Rocky Mountain Radio Council was producing around 375 different programs every year. Jack Weir Lewis, a writer-director, is employed full time at regular weekly salary to run the artistic end. He has two staff engineers and a staff announcer to assist him.

The provocative fact about the Rocky Mountain Radio Council is that it has moved definitely in the direction of self-liquidating its foundation funds and may one day carry on entirely under its own local revenues. It operates the only free-lance radio-building and broadcast-recording service in Denver.

The council works for and with educational institutions and commercial stations. It seeks out and exploits acting, writing, speaking talent among the colleges and in the communities it covers. Thus the council has presented special radio programs with the American composer, Roy Harris, who is attached to the faculty of Colorado (Springs) College, and a series of talks on aviation by the slick-magazine fiction writer, William E. Barrett, who is a Denver resident, and so on. Thanks to the council, college presidents and college professors in Colorado and Wyoming use radio, think in radio terms and know the practical problems of broadcasting.

A distinction is properly drawn in the industry between "network radio" and "local radio." These are the parts which form the whole, which fuse and blend, overlap and share and yet remain unlike in many respects. One notes the network distinction especially in greater New York City where twenty-two stations function but

where four of them—WABC, WEAF, WJZ, WOR—have special status because they are the key stations of, respectively, the Columbia, National, American and Mutual networks. Nor is their status merely a reflection of their 50,000 watts of power, for two purely local stations, Loew's WHN and Hearst's WINS, also are licensed for 50 kw.

The networks are highly visible and their "glamour" all-pervading in New York. They occupy some of the choicest playhouses on Broadway. The Theatre Guild itself has turned over the Guild Theatre to the radio showmen, and where once Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and Earle Larimore held forth on the boards the Mutual network now presents "Can You Top This?" Everywhere the radio studios and the theaters turned into radio studios remind the public at large and showmen in particular of the importance of the new entertainment-advertising medium. Autograph hunters lurk around the radio halls even as around the Paramount stage door. Approximately 70,000 New Yorkers "go downtown" to attend free broadcast performances every week. And when the program is especially popular, a Major Bowes, a Clifton Fadiman "Information Please," a Phil Baker "Take It or Leave It," a Kate Smith, such broadcasts bring out that weirdest kind of bootlegger—the man who in a knowing whisper, eyes averted, offers to sell tickets which have no price but do have value.

The very heart and symbol of smart mid-town Fifth Avenue is Radio City, home of NBC and ABC. In, through and round about these elegant premises tramps an unending procession of gawkers. They come literally from all over the world. Uniformed guides trained to a specific style of elegance to match their subject matter marshal the visitors into neatly numbered bands. Every sight-seer wears a colorful ticket in his lapel. Some 600,000 of them annually take either the forty-cent or the ninety-cent tour, grand or supergrand.

NBC has 2,261 full-time employees in six cities, New York, Washington, Cleveland, Chicago, Denver and San Francisco, but

1,380 of these are at work in Radio City. This compares with 286 in Chicago and 238 in Hollywood. Some 2,500 persons are employed among CBS's home office, 485 Madison Avenue, the studio building around the corner on East Fifty-second Street and its several technical plants. Mutual at 1440 Broadway has around 250 on the payroll, and ABC's roster approximates 400.

The networks set the tone, they provide the façade, they dominate the news of radio in New York. But what of the other stations? Do not assume that they are also-rans. Quite otherwise. WNEW and WHN each gross well above \$1,000,000 annually. WMCA is not far behind. WOV's gross has run around \$500,000 annually, sixty percent from Italian language programs. The Cowles Brothers purchased WHOM, technically a Jersey City station but with main offices in Manhattan, for \$400,000.

Each New York station has its own problem and each its own solution, but one and all share a common asset of superlative importance—the concentrated size of the New York market. Metropolitan New York with its five boroughs, Manhattan, Richmond, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, is a "nation" of 7,000,000 people. Several more millions reside in the suburbs and the surrounding counties. All this spells circulation and sales and business opportunities. New York has many audiences, many levels of culture and income, interest and appeal. Hence New York is unique in supporting what may be described as "neighborhood" stations, as in the Bronx and Brooklyn. It is unique in having foreign-language stations broadcasting in as many as ten different tongues. It is unique in having one station, WQXR, which frankly caters to "high-brows." It is unique in having, alone among the bigger cities of America, a municipally owned station. The strangely uneven course of this station, WNYC, represents not the least of New York's radio oddities.

The city government established WNYC in 1924, but little seems to have been done during the first decade. WNYC had two small studios under a blind monitoring system. Microphone rehearsals were unknown and sound "levels" could not be taken

before programs were actually on the air. Red tape, politics, no funds, disinterest—whatever the proper explanation, WNYC was incredibly crude prior to 1933. It had no regular program schedule or continuities and borrowed phonograph records in exchange for a commercial plug although the station was supposed to be noncommercial. WNYC seldom began broadcasting before noontime on Sundays and often stayed off the air entirely on holidays. The station had the reputation of being excessively timid and was far more severe in censorship of talks than most commercial managements. WNYC would not allow the city's own Department of Health to mention the term "social diseases." The program schedule prior to 1933 was heavy with build-ups for Tammany Hall Democrats. To fill in time when nothing else was available announcers read again and again a series of stale mimeographed talks which were kept in the files for that purpose. WNYC's lackadaisical operations resulted finally in the station suffering a loss of its full-time wavelength to WMCA, and ever since WNYC has had an inferior dial position, signing off at sundown in Minneapolis, which means very early throughout the winter months.

The La Guardia administration held WNYC in more respect and proceeded to initiate a series of reforms. Under Morris Novik new studios and modern monitoring equipment were installed. An air-conditioning unit allowed WNYC finally to keep the windows closed in summertime, thereby banishing that mixture of harbor whistles and street noises which had often been part of the broadcasts. A music library was built up, news service purchased, a regular schedule worked out well ahead, ending reliance upon improvisation by announcers. The station began providing market prices for consumers, initiating series tied in with the various municipal departments. After a time Fiorello La Guardia himself took to the kilocycles with a Sunday noontime talk which was remarkable for its color and originality if not always for dignified statesmanship.

Perhaps the greatest disability to the upgrading of the munici-

pal station was the requirement that WNYC hire its staff, with some exceptions, through competitive Civil Service examinations and at salary scales substantially less than those paid by commercial radio. This was an impossible handicap since experienced radiomen would not stoop to conquer at such rates.

Probably but little known to most New Yorkers is 1,000-watt, part-time WBBR in Brooklyn. This is operated by the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, Incorporated. Founded by Pastor Russell of "millions now living will never die" fame and shepherded in later years by Judge Rutherford, the Watchtower group, or Jehovah's Witnesses as they are generally known, utilize many modern advertising techniques to spread their gospel, but they are rather swallowed up in the sheer bigness of Gomorrah.

On the whole radio-station management as such is far less the cynosure of public attention in New York than in smaller communities. Major Edward Bowes was but a nominal personality in the days when he was managing director of the Capitol Theatre and running Station WHN as a side job. True his Sunday morning "Capitol Theatre Family" on NBC had given him some public fame. But his contemporary of the Strand Theatre, S. L. Rothafel, was better known as a radio master of ceremonies ("Roxy's Gang") than Bowes. It was when Bowes personally took over WHN's amateur hour that he skyrocketed to national celebrity. When Bowes left Loew's to go on to richer pastures he was succeeded as manager of WHN by Herbert Pettey, the former secretary of the Federal Communications Commission.

Theatrical influence is perhaps slightly more noticeable in the management of New York radio stations than in, say, those of Des Moines, and for fairly obvious reasons. Alfred J. McCosker, president of WOR and twice president of the National Association of Broadcasters, was a film press agent in his younger years. He rejoiced in the sobriquet of "Broadway" McCosker. His first dealings with WOR were in connection with theatrical gossip programs which he conducted for the greater glory of his clients.

The management of WOR eventually passed into the hands of McCosker and he has remained in charge ever since. The owners of Macy's Department store own WOR, and a former dean of the Harvard Business School, Theodore I. Streibert, is its general manager. Interestingly enough, a theatrical printer, Donald Flamm, "picked up" WMCA more or less for a song in the early twenties and made a fortune before he finally sold out for \$800,000.

Another big-town trait is the voice given on New York stations to the political, intellectual and cultural ferment of our times. New York tends to be well ahead of most other communities in the reflection, through radio, of minority sentiment and social criticism. This, of course, is not a flat statement but a tentative generality. Under the latter-day management of Nathan Straus and the active program direction of his wife Helen Straus, Station WMCA, for example, has taken a distinctly "liberal" tack in treating issues of the day. WMCA is the station which broadcasts the Negro series "New World A-Comin'" derived from Roi Ottley's book of that title.

The EVD in Station WEVD stands for the late Socialist, Eugene V. Debs, the man who was incarcerated in a Federal penitentiary during World War I for "opposing the war." The station is loosely identified with the rightist wing of the leftist movement and with the Yiddish press of New York. Various labor unions sponsor programs heard on WEVD. "The Voice of Local 89" of the Italian Ladies Garment Union is a case in point.

Arde Bulova, the watchmaker whose time announcements are familiar on radio stations all over the United States, owns WNEW and WOV in Manhattan. Both are exceedingly prosperous, notably WNEW, but under the FCC ruling against one ownership of two stations in a single market Bulova must find a buyer for WOV, a station which operates in the Italian language throughout the day and in English by night. During the war Bulova applied to the commission for permission to sell to certain Italian business in-

terests, but various publications including the newspaper PM raised such a clamor that this sale was not approved.

WOV has been outstanding in the presentation of antifascistic programs. A series of these written by the station's program director, Arnold Hartley, were commended by *Variety*, the Writers' War Board, various newspapers and others. He finally won a Peabody Award (given by the University of Georgia annually to meritorious radio programs).

This same Hartley, an alumnus of the University of Chicago and fluent in his station's second language—Italian—has explained the origins of foreign-language broadcasting:

Such programs took shape in the early thirties when business was slack and competition between the smaller stations keen. They had discovered that the emotional impact of an advertising message delivered in a listener's first-learned language and suggestively enfolded in a program of music or drama evoking the most nostalgic memories of a listener's far-away birthplace was infinitely greater than the same message in English. They also made the sinister discovery that nationality—even in America—has competitive value: Poles will more readily buy from Poles, Italians from Italians and so on. The widespread application of these discoveries to great centres of foreign-language concentration like New York, Chicago and Detroit, turned a number of stations completely away from English language programming. Foreign-language broadcasting kept a lot of stations afloat at a rough time.

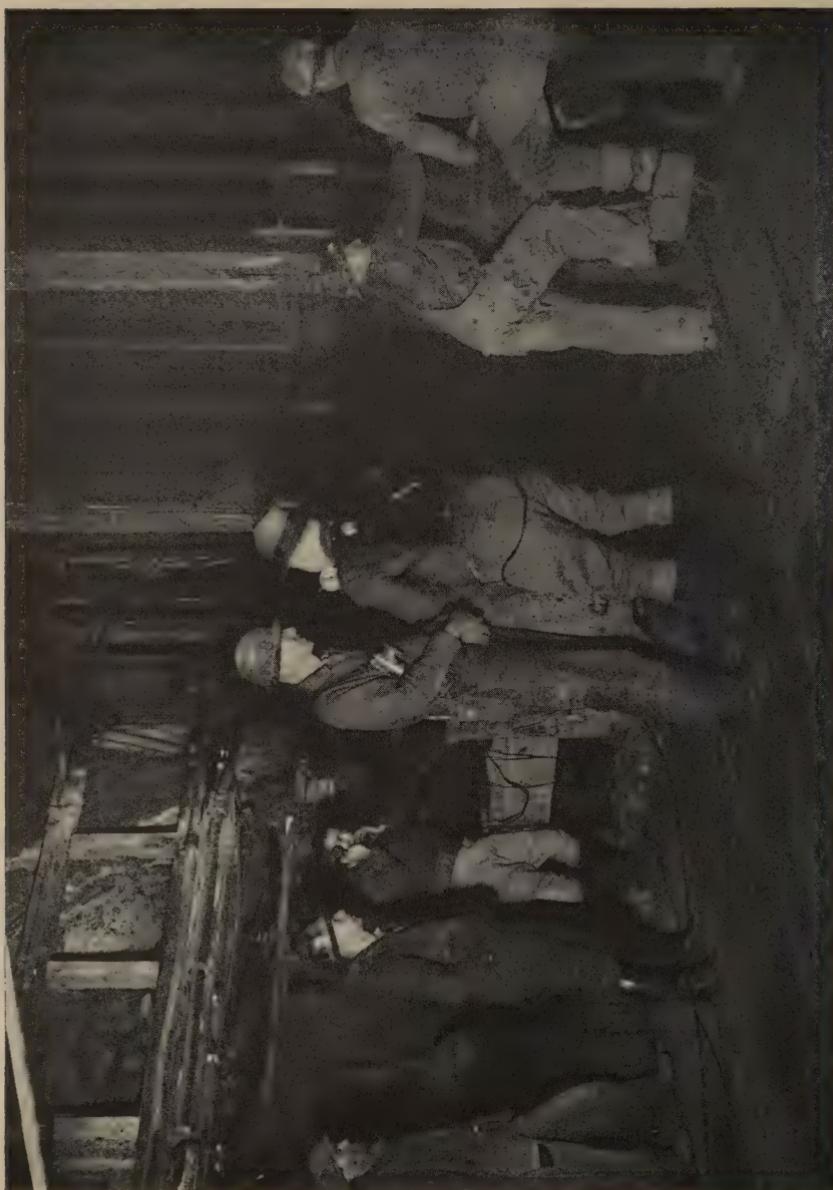
Station WBNX in the Bronx carries programs in ten different tongues—German, Italian, Yiddish, Lithuanian, Armenian, Spanish, Polish, Greek, Ukrainian, French. And in addition there are special serenades, in English, singling out the Irish and the Negroes as cohesive groups.

The flavor of WBNX's programs is the flavor of mixed, many-sided cosmopolitan uptown New York. It is rich in the unusual. A speaker laments the bad morals of the day, recommends that listeners join the Society Santa Teresa del Bambino Jesus, the



Radio in a Denver courtroom (Note Castor Oil on judge's bench)

Mining news is big news in Denver—Pick-up in a mountain shaft



Santa Teresa who protects the soldiers. Another appeal calls upon the faithful to visit the Madonna di Lourdes in the Bronx. The Bronx Board of Trade, the Bronx Veterans of Foreign Wars, the forthcoming "Festival of Puerto Rican Youth"—these are among the assorted interests exploited via WBNX. Present, too, is an engaging peripatetic announcer who interviews customers and grocers in the kosher shops of the borough, not forgetting at suitable intervals to allude to a certain clean, fresh, pure brand of synthetic shortening.

When Norwegian was added to WHOM's modern Tower of Babel the sales manager estimated a potential audience in greater New York of 100,000 Norwegian-understanding listeners. Wrigley Gum is a frequent advertiser in the various languages. Macaroni, cheese, olive oil, tomato paste, vino, predominate in Italian. Records are interrupted during a Greek program to report marriages and births among their own kind.

WBYN in Brooklyn presents Hungarian, Lithuanian and Russian disc jockeys and a storyteller known as the "Jewish Mark Twain." The same station counts as its *pièce de résistance* the "American Court for Peace and Justice," an imposing-sounding variation of Mr. Anthony, the solver of problems.

The "disc jockey" is not a New York invention but the breed thrives economically in the metropolitan area for the same reason many bizarre enterprises thrive in New York—there are just so many people around all the time. New York abounds in owl saloons, in diners and restaurants and drugstores that go on half through or all through the night. The Tenderloin is still aglow, thousands are still on the street, at two and three in the morning. The stay-ups, the can't-sleeps, the night watchmen, the bed-ridden invalids holding onto the contact with the outer world: all these make up the audience of the disc jockey who rides to popularity on a spinning platter of shellac and gutta-percha.

One of the more colorful characters is WOR's Barry Gray. He specializes in facetious "insults" of those who telephone or who

come into the studio to be interviewed at 4:00 A. M. Gray is of New York New York, of show business smart, of jive talk glib. His chatter is about orchestra leaders, their side-men, arrangements, talents. Or he'll discuss the latest movie or stage play or night club or comment on the style, personality, attitude and ethics of a gossip columnist or a Broadway press agent. Now and again he drifts into a rather casual and oh-yes-I-forgot commercial on behalf of his nocturnal sponsor, the theatrical newspaper, *Variety*.

Half a dozen radio stations offer all-night disc jockeys. They vary from straight comment with little color to uninhibited flamboyance. WHOM's "Symphony Sid" confounds his public by playing jazz. The same disc-jockey formula—phonograph records interspersed with conversation—is utilized with marked success by a number of savants during daylight hours. The case extraordinaire is Mr. Martin Block. This gentleman has been going longest and has gone, financially, the farthest. During the planning of New York's reception to General Dwight D. Eisenhower a public and well-publicized offer was made to Mayor La Guardia and Grover Whalen for the loan of a long black sleek open car which was just the vehicle to transport a conquering hero through the streets of Manhattan. This long black sleek open job was owned—the WNEW press agent allowed it to be understood—by America's premier disc jockey. Nothing more was heard of the proposal. General Eisenhower was hauled around in a less-publicized chariot. Nonetheless the incident served to remind folks that Martin Block was one of the great successes of his times. His income is certainly not less than \$100,000 a year.

The economics of a disc jockey program are somewhat involved and probably not identical in any two cases. The disc jockey—it is of the essence of his commercial appeal that he personally "sells" the product—gets a percentage of every advertising dollar taken in by the station. The most successful practitioners of the art are compensated at the rate of two dollars a minute; lesser artists receive lesser honorariums, perhaps only fifty cents a minute.

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## CHAPTER IX

### MAPS, STATISTICS AND PUSH BUTTONS

FROM the foregoing comments upon three different American communities and their variegated broadcasting units it is obvious that in American radio the cloth is cut to the figure. The local station, in a competitive situation, must find or create a *raison d'être*. If it is shut out of a connection with the better networks, if it has an inferior allocation, a weaker signal, a less imposing plant, if it cannot expect certain advantages which accrue to its rivals, then the station must forage in the surrounding terrain for the means to survive. Perhaps in an industrial community the fifth station may find that its best customer is a labor union rather than a "business." Among many broadcasting companies all elbowing each other in a rivalry for audience one station may stake its claim for popularity on a policy of jazz-and-sports emphasis. Another seeks prosperity through news and stunts. A third tries Irish jigs or hillbilly tunes or *Lohengrin*. Each station strives to establish a business thesis. "Use us—we reach the upper crust!" "Use us—we've got the Lithuanian market sewed up!"

There is method in this sometimes-seeming madness of station competition. Business profits depend on proof of popularity, proof of circulation, proof of results. Every commercial radio station is judged by the unsentimental measurements of advertising agencies. Its claims of coverage, its rate structure, its relative strength or weakness vis-à-vis other stations in the same territory are being forever challenged. The advertiser demands "reason why" from the advertising medium.

In the advertising agency is an executive known simply as the time buyer. He functions in a little world of maps and statistics. Most of the time buyers are located in New York, Chicago, San

Francisco, Detroit and a few other centers. They are regularly solicited for business by radio stations all over the nation. Usually, the station is "represented" by one of the forty sales-agent firms that collect a commission of fifteen percent for all the business they are able to secure.

This is the beginning of the "tell me why I should advertise on your station" routine. The station representative may be a "long list" man—that is, he represents a great many stations in a great many different markets—or he may be a "short list" man—that is, he confines himself to a relatively few stations.

The time buyer wants to buy time intelligently. He does not want to be misled. He does not want to accept the third or the fourth best station under the impression that it is the second best. He demands verifiable facts. With only occasional opportunities to leave his desk and travel into the actual towns the time buyer wants the station sales representative to "bring the station to the buyer." He wants an honest portrait and an honest count.

The station sales representative must know the radio business. He must talk the language. He must understand advertising-agency practice. And as a practical consideration he must have tact and political savvy. The station sales representative must not go over the head of the time buyer and try to sell the client directly. This is not, in an advertising agency, the road to personal popularity.

The relationship of the time buyer to the station representative was established early in the thirties. Prior to that period a good many advertising agencies were hostile or lukewarm toward the medium. Time brokers, ignored by advertising agencies, ignored them in turn and took their case to the main source, the advertiser, and often with success.

The now-forgotten general time broker lived by having program ideas, merchandising gimmicks, novel tie-ups. With these he "crashed" the client. He did not sell radio but practical ways to use radio. He was a product of the era of skepticism and engaged in a

battle of wits with advertising agencies who disliked radio as an "unproved" medium, as circulation of "unknown" size and control. The general time broker's strategy was to fire the imagination of the principal and rely on the principal to compel his advertising agency to buy time. The brokerage on the idea came, in the end, from the stations who got the business "created" by the broker.

Bad feeling inevitably developed from a situation in which the regular buying agent found his advice brushed aside and saw the upstart broker's tactics crowned with success. This practice struck at the fundamentals of harmonious agency-client relations, for the client, once convinced by the free-roving time broker often turned peevishly to his agency and asked, "Why didn't you recognize the value of this proposal? Why were you asleep at the switch? If you don't know anything about radio, why don't you learn?"

Finally the issue had to be resolved. The time brokers were succeeding despite the advertising agencies. Worst, they were threatening the agencies' prestige. A condition was developing in which any free lance "idea man" might hope to score a success in disregard altogether of the advertising agency. The agency's whole professional position as privileged counsel and expert in advertising would collapse if the function of devising program ideas were open to outsiders. The growing importance of radio forced the showdown. The American Association of Advertising Agencies and the National Association of Broadcasters struck a gentlemen's agreement under which the radio stations agreed to appoint only "ethical" representatives who did not go over the head of the agencies. This simple maneuver almost overnight outlawed the general time broker whose stock-in-trade was program ideas rather than station lists and who sold radio as a medium and not specific radio markets.

With the advent of the "ethical" station sales representatives a standardized method of doing business gradually evolved. The sales rep talked up his particular station and talked down competitive stations. Through this interplay of claim and counterclaim both time buyers and stations were educated. Sensible claims re-

placed pipedreams; the blue sky and the water were gradually removed from radio circulation figures.

There were three kinds of radio advertising: (a) network advertising which was contracted by advertising agencies and networks without involving station sales representatives; (b) national spot advertising, which was the core of the relationship of time buyer and station representative; (c) local retail advertising, which usually went to the station directly and involved neither network, advertising agency, nor national sales representative.

Many stations, and all the more prosperous ones, derived revenues from all three sources. They carried a large percentage of network commercials, they carried a considerable volume of national spot business, and finally they loaded up with as much retail Main Street advertising as they could get or for which they had available time.

The time buyers in the big advertising agencies are a demanding lot. They shrewdly evaluate a radio station—and its community—according to size, wealth, number of retail outlets, number of wholesale outlets, local industries. Every market is numbered. In adman patois Chicago is “the second market,” St. Louis “the eleventh market,” and Birmingham “the umteenth market.” The time buyer is a student of the United States Census, a collector of data from chambers of commerce, department stores, newspapers, automobile registration bureaus. A time buyer knows how many telephones, radio sets, bathtubs and washing machines there are in Keokuk and he expects the station sales representative to know, too.

There are peculiarities of radio reception conditions. Certain mountainous areas are blurred signal-wise. One wavelength may be better than another. The time buyer wants information on how many stations are heard in a given town, in what order they are listened to. If a large city is involved he is curious as to “blind spots” or neighborhoods in which an otherwise strong signal is

weak. He's concerned about summer sunspots and anything else that favorably or unfavorably affects radio reception and thereby improves or damages potential circulation.

Listening habits and entertainment preferences vary from region to region and class to class. Three out of every ten Americans are foreign-born and in New York City the ratio is doubled. The time buyer had to add that factor to his equations. He must calculate the differences between Youngstown and Ypsilanti. How many language newspapers are published in the market? How strong are the cultural ties with the homeland? What are the racial tensions, if any? What part of the people are marginal or substandard in economic status? What products can they afford and not afford? In the cotton share-crop baronies many men do not own a whole suit of clothes. They are customers for nothing except blue denim overalls and heavy work boots and cheap straw hats.

Religious variations, occupational variations, educational background, bank deposits, insurance policies outstanding, number of people on relief, number of commuters, average box-office receipts in local film theaters—any of this data and all of it feed the radio time buyer's insatiable interest in the markets and the station serving the markets.

He is also interested in the radio-management policies which contribute to popularity. Wherein is the station individualized? Are its announcers on their toes? Does the station attract attention, step out on its own initiative or limply stick to schedule no matter what comes up? Is the station on cordial or feuding terms with the local press? How old is the station's antenna, how modern its studios, how glossy its front?

With which network a station is affiliated counts importantly in the calculations of the national spot buyer, for a time break between two popular network programs is correspondingly more desirable than a time break between two tired fill-ins. A station builds its audience and its popularity in large measure through

the quality of the programs on the network. Local time when contiguous to big national star-heavy entertainments acquires an added value to spot advertisers.

The national time buyer is impressed when a local station produces radio programs good enough to get on the network. A certain number of network shows are picked up from remote points. NBC for example may take shows from WGY, Schenectady, or WTMJ, Milwaukee, while CBS turns to, say, KMBC, Kansas City, or WBT, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Victor Ratner could quip, "Historically the facts about radio are distressingly simple. Because the programs were there, people listened. Because they listened, the programs were there. The dollar volume of radio advertising went up as though hitched to a balloon." This was condensing a complicated story. There were distinctions to be drawn among networks, among stations, among programs. Those distinctions reflected business policies, personality, brains, flashes of genius.

The plodding time buyer kept asking for coverage maps. Stations were expected to supply engineering reports attested by reputable consultants. The time buyer had an enthusiasm for kidney-shaped blotches on topography. In the trade jargon these blotches were the tracing of the station's half-millivolt contour. How many people lived inside that contour? How many of them listened to Station X? Was Station X's rate for thirty-word announcements reasonably related to the available audience? The actual audience?

Trucks stopping on country lanes to conduct mysterious tests are probably enlisted in the cause of the field-strength map. That is related to all sorts of census data and is compared with the pattern of fan-mail response.

Fan mail is far less important today than it once was but it still plays a part in audience measurement. It is no longer necessary to convince time buyers that radio is potent or here to stay. Their present concern is solely with the best possible buy for the money. They are discriminating shoppers but anxious to snatch at all bar-

gains. Information about the pulling power of a given station or a given program or personality on that station unfailingly fascinates the time buyer, and the sales representatives vie to provide them with provocative hints of rare business opportunities.

Maps are of many kinds. There are orange maps, blue maps, brown maps, Ben Day jobs and rainbow maps. There are modest maps and boastful maps, maps that belittle the competitor's—and the time buyer's—intelligence. Some effort has been made and considerable success achieved in standardizing these procedures, and major reforms are under way. But maps, like tables of statistics, are to the economies of broadcast advertising a categorical imperative.

Every local station maintains a variety of continuing programs and services which regularly attract national spot buyers. Time signals, weather reports, kitchen advice, disc jockeys, sports round-ups, hillbilly jamborees, news bulletins, breakfast clubs. About these offerings the time buyer wants to know a lot of facts. How often are they on the air? How long have they endured? Who's the dominant personality, if any? What are the charges for time and talent? He wants also proof of popularity, the names of previous sponsors. Are there restrictions on the length of advertising copy, on what may be mentioned? Ordinary answers to local-station time costs are kept up to date in the monthly issues of a periodical called *Standard Rate and Data Service*, but on special services special negotiation is usually indicated. The most frequent demand from a time buyer to a station sales representative is for up-to-date lists of "availabilities."

A quarrelsome matter is the subject of "merchandising." Stripped down to its essential purpose merchandising is a convenient name for all those activities which are used in correlation with advertising in order to assure sales results. It is the follow-up. Obvious examples: (a) letters to jobbers and dealers, (b) actual calls by salesmen on retail outlets in order to stimulate enthusiasm. Merchandising includes window displays of the kind most cigarette

companies, soap companies, grocery companies arrange. It is all a standard part of our modern twentieth-century package-goods distribution system. Where the local radio station comes in—and where the controversy comes in—is in executing or refusing to execute certain services for the advertiser. The trade quarrel is over the propriety of doing this at all, and whether the advertiser has a right to expect any merchandising on a gratis basis as a consideration in an advertising contract. In effect, it is charged, this amounts to rate cutting. A station is not charging \$400 an hour as stated in its official schedule if on the side it donates thirty-two dollars' worth of merchandising service.

A station will perhaps give and a time buyer will perhaps demand more merchandising co-operation in hard times than in good times. Meanwhile nobody denies the value of merchandising. The quarrel is over who should undertake the responsibility and how and by whom the expenses should be borne.

Many of the practices which were once common have now disappeared from the business day of the bigger high-powered and regional stations. One pristine practice, the contingency contract, has been in ill repute for years. By this contract an advertiser "went into business on the station's time" without investing anything or assuming any financial commitment save the promise to pay the station an agreed percentage of whatever direct orders it attracted. Another variation was the cost-per-inquiry whereby the station was not compensated according to a published rate schedule but on the basis of, say, thirty cents, or fifty-two cents, or \$1.15, for every bona fide sales prospect turned over to the advertiser.

As the years passed radio "success stories" became so numerous and so spectacular that broadcasters overcame whatever inferiority feelings they originally suffered. The National Association of Broadcasters collected folios jam packed with case histories classified according to industry. The radio salesman could paralyze his opponent with proof of effectiveness that was practically stupefying to the imagination. After a time advertisers were less disposed to

say to the local station, "Show me a hundred letters a day and I'll be convinced." That was too easy. Nor was the old ridicule of the radio audience as composed of ignorant people justified. Fan mail came in from the "A" income homes written on embossed stationery. The bon ton and the rednecks alike doted on radio.

Again and again when the statement was made over the radio, "Telephone the station to which you are listening," the response was so overwhelming that telephone service was hopelessly tied up and the local telephone company would compel the stations to stop making such announcements. When Major Bowes started his telephone voting in connection with his amateur show an elaborate special installation and batteries of extra girls had to be pre-organized in each town from week to week.

Radio proof of effectiveness became so commonplace that many in the trade grew bored with the whole repetitious theme as it appeared and reappeared in station mailing pieces, brochures and trade-paper advertisements. The evidence came down like snow. And it kept on snowing until a veritable glacier was piled up. The tall tales were varied and colorful but they all kept proving what presently hardly needed proof—namely, that people did listen to the radio. The offer of free "newspapers" from Lum and Abner's mythical Pine Ridge, Arkansas, produced 400,000 requests. Over 150,000 sought souvenir booklets from the sponsor of the Admiral Byrd show. To obtain Kate Smith's portrait 45,000 cigar bands were mailed in. Limericks, slogans, jingles drew responses aggregating millions. When Guy Lombardo broke a violin string he got 193 yards of catgut in the mail—a spontaneous shared impulse of his admirers.

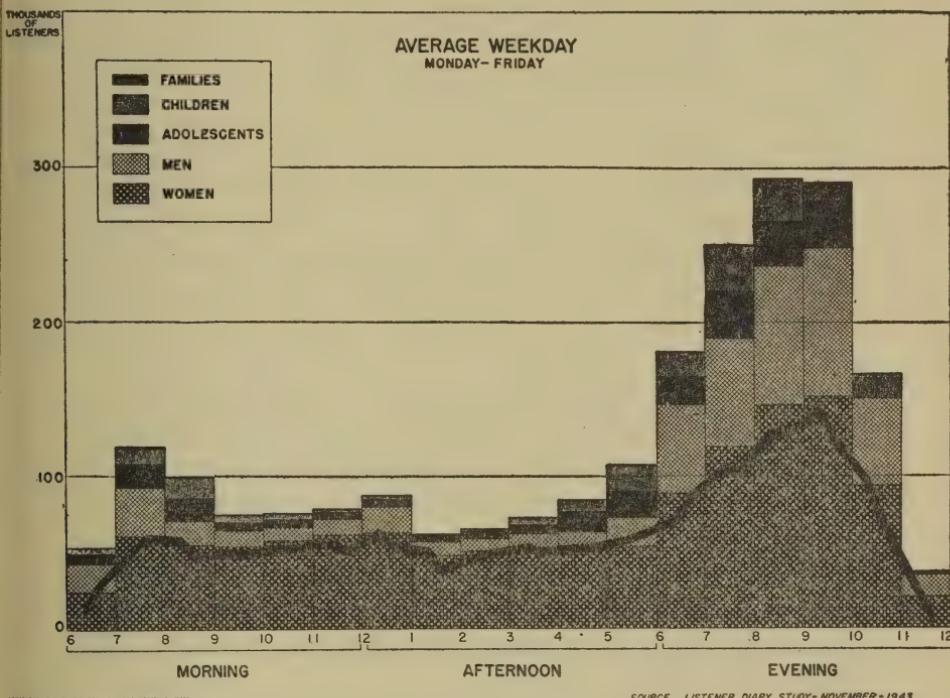
It was noted very early in broadcast advertising history that listeners were of many kinds. Many people just happened to tune in. They roamed the dial at will in quest of something to engage their fancy. Other listeners snapped on the radio and let it play indefinitely paying little attention to the programs. They did their housework with half an ear for the radio and half an ear for the

doorbell above the noise of the vacuum cleaner. Or the radio soothed them while washing or ironing. And in the evening radio was often the half-neglected background music for card playing or visiting or highballs. Because tens of thousands of sets were operating in this twilight zone of half-attentive listeners it was possible for them to hear a line or two out of context. The Orson Welles hullabaloo was of that sort, many listeners taking as gospel truth—because they heard it on the radio—the simulated news of a supposed invasion of New Jersey by monster warriors from Mars. But the nucleus of radio's audience were both regular and attentive. They planned their listening and they listened. There remained, however, a vast mass of set owners who tuned in only on special occasions, as when the President spoke or two heavyweights fought it out for the championship or the favorites lined up before Ted Husing at Churchill Downs.

The skeptics shifted their ground and revised the nature of their doubting questions as time went on and documentation buried their original points. This matter of the inattentive ear, the dreamy mood, the unpredictable casualness of listening disturbed those who liked things neat and orderly. It was especially upsetting to the serious-minded advertiser to learn that when the announcer spoke those golden words of self-bought praise of his product not everybody within hearing paused to register completely every exciting syllable.

Radio survived every fresh wave of skepticism. The fact was that the harnessing of the ether had created something new under the sun—a simultaneous audience which was so large, so regular, so diverse, that, with every allowance, every subtraction, every opposition of room noise, children, callers, vacuum cleaners, doorbells, and total absence from home, the effective residue amounted, for all practical purpose, to humanity itself. The American public was spending \$505,000,000 in a single year to buy radio sets, radio tubes, to keep them in repair and to charge them with electrical current. This compared with \$165,000,000 spent for magazines and \$526,000,000 spent for newspapers.

# THE LISTENING AUDIENCE IN PRIMARY LISTENING AREA



The broadcasting industry boasted of 27,500,000 radio families and there were 6,000,000 automobiles equipped with receivers—this out of a total of 32,641,000 American families in all and 19,000,000 automobiles on the roads. Of all American families eighty-four percent owned radios but only thirty-nine percent had telephones and only thirty-nine percent had bathtubs. A survey of the membership of the American Legion found ninety-two percent owning radios, sixty-three percent electric refrigerators, sixty-five percent vacuum cleaners and fifty-two percent washing ma-

chines. In the land of gadgets the radio was the supreme gadget. As the CBS brochure expressed the matter, "Except for the very poor and a thin fringe of eccentrics everybody owns a radio." *Fortune* magazine's survey of public entertainment ranked radio first, followed in sequence by movies, magazines and books, hunting and fishing, sports events. Said CBS again: "More people spend more time listening to radio programs than they spend doing anything else except working and sleeping." In urban areas eighty percent of all set-owners listen every day and in rural areas it's eighty-eight percent. This is high integration indeed with daily American life.

People listen to radio, said the trade's wise men, because (a) it's so easy to listen; (b) it's so much fun to listen (c) there's so much to listen to. "Everybody and everything that interests people is on the air."

Prodded by the skeptics and the time buyers and stung by the condescending wisecracks of competitive advertising media, the broadcasting industry moved to provide practical substitutes for the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the shibboleth of all periodical advertising from 1914 onward. It was a slow, laborious and costly task. Nor was there unanimity on audience-measurement techniques. There was no one answer to the question put by admen. Rather there were many spotlights beamed upon particular aspects of the total mystery.

A latter-day concern was so-called "audience turnover." A National Association of Broadcasters bulletin puts it this way:

A program broadcast five times a week at the same hour each week may have an average rating for the week of 5.0. This rating says, in effect, that in the average day of the five days measured, one out of every 20 of the radio families sampled heard this program. But not every family heard the program every day—some families may have heard all five broadcasts; others only one.

"Program ratings" are the most talked-about data in the broadcasting industry. There are several methods of working out such

ratings. In effect they seek to chart a pattern of comparative listening, hence of program popularity. There are three principal methods of measuring radio audiences. First, telephone calls made coincidentally with the basic question, "To what station or program are you now listening?" Second, recall telephone calls made not coincidentally but subsequently. The listener is asked at noon-time to recall the morning, at twilight to recall the afternoon and in early morning to recall the previous evening. Third, audimeter studies. The audimeter is a patented tape device actually installed upon sets in people's homes to record their choice of programs. The last system may take years to mature but has the advantage of divorcing the report altogether from dependence on the testimony and memory of persons questioned at random by telephone.

The first of the network-program popularity-rating systems was organized in 1929 by the research house of Archibald M. Crossley acting on behalf of a group of radio sponsors and their advertising agencies. The term "Crossley" became synonymous among actors with success or failure. One had a good or bad "Crossley" and flourished or languished accordingly. The time buyers in turn worshiped these ratings and preferred to buy spots contiguous with the most popular shows and on the most popular networks. The official name of the Crossley service was the Co-operative Analysis of Broadcasting. Its reports were privileged to subscribers (mostly advertising agencies and national advertisers) and could not be published in trade journals without special and seldom-given permission. The CAB pioneered the "recall" telephone system and used no other for twelve years but thereafter used also the coincidental telephone system.

A private organization as distinct from the co-operative Crossley-serviced group inaugurated the coincidental method. C. E. Hooper, Inc., differed in many significant respects in its approach to ratings and in its attitude toward them. It sanctioned limited press pickup of its copyright "Hooperatings."

The A. C. Nielson Company of Chicago, experts in market re-

search, originated the audimeter method, regarded by many technicians as the method of the future. Meantime, Dr. Frank Stanton of Ohio State University, who subsequently became, at thirty-seven, the president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, had, in his capacity as CBS Director of Research, collaborated with Dr. Paul Lazarsfeld of Columbia University in developing a "push-button" program analyzer method. He had also assumed considerable initiative in the development of a so-called "Listener Diary" technique.

The "Listener Diary" is an elaborate method of securing by cash inducements an actual written diary of day-to-day listening in individual families. It enables the research expert to obtain a picture of program listening with all sorts of details as to age, sex, income and significant habits of listeners, and to trace the zigzag course of family choice among the available networks and stations.

A mechanical device is used in the Stanton-Lazarsfeld Analyzer. A given number of persons are gathered around a table in a pleasant room. Each person holds under the table out of sight a "negative" and a "positive" push button. A radio program which has been transcribed on a record is played and the members of the panel press the buttons at their discretion, say, in effect, "I like this part of the program" or "I think this actor is rotten." An exact record of these at-the-moment emotional responses to the actual content of the broadcast is secured in this manner. Afterward the individual and collective tracings are placed directly under a minute-by-minute chart of the program ingredients and an elaborate analysis is then undertaken under the skillful questioning of a professional study master.

The radio business operates in so-called thirteen-week cycles. These are not necessarily uniform but in general one thirteen-week period running from sometime in June to sometime in September represents what is known as the summer hiatus, or the period during which many big advertisers vacation from the air altogether or, instead of their costly wintertime entertainments,

substitute more economical replacements. It is in the summer-time that networks—having more open time then than during the rest of the year—plan their tryouts of new program ideas and advertising agencies are more inclined to “gamble” with an untried vehicle or star. The great ambition of many a program creator is to be accepted as a summer replacement, proceed to make good in a big way, and then be promoted to a regular season show.

It disturbs the network that advertisers drop out in summer or seriously curtail their talent budgets. Various fifty-two week discount plans have been devised to pull away from this tendency. Another nuisance to the networks is daylight-saving time which is not adopted universally. Population-wise, most of the country comes under daylight saving after late April each year, but, geography-wise large areas remain on standard time. This breaks listening habit patterns and together with the plethora of replacement programs rather successfully confuses millions of radio fans.

The drop-off in listener percentages between April and May after daylight-saving time amounted to 21.9 percent according to a piece by C. E. Hooper in *Printer's Ink* of June 14, 1940. “The smallest loser was Saturday evening—off 12.8 percent. The biggest loser was Monday evening—off 28.3 percent.” Some seasonal slackening was to be expected but radio’s losses were excessive and due, Mr. Hooper felt, to a combination of circumstances many of which could be controlled or drastically modified. The main fault lay, he was convinced, with the industry’s shattering of people’s habits. Suddenly the familiar program was no longer heard at the familiar time and place on the dial. In its place strange substitutes carried on. This happened every late spring and early summer. Dozens of popular shows were withdrawn and the whole program schedule was scrambled. Said Mr. Hooper: “If editorial features were as unceremoniously dropped and ‘circulation’ losses of comparable magnitude took place in any group of magazines or newspapers, editors would be fired wholesale.”

In recent years much has been heard among radio-program ad-

ministrators about "mood listening" and the importance of preserving and exploiting the benefits of a sequence of programs which "flow" one to the other (despite change of sponsorship) and tend to hold the audience. This means that several comedy programs together are desirable. Three or four such shows in a row, as for example NBC's Tuesday night powerhouse, are mutually helpful one to the other. A group of daytime serials scheduled back to back caters to audience "mood." Sudden and mood-shocking changes of program type cause millions of listeners to "flow" to other stations. There is obviously a point of diminishing returns, not to say absurdity, in the theory of "mood listening." Nonetheless it is a fully valid principle of radio showmanship and one that should be carefully weighed in making decisions.

By the continuing studies of this kind the radio industry has made itself "scientific." Guesswork on circulation has been replaced by tested data. Objectivity has been enshrined and scholarship has formed a partnership with showmanship. It is not the least "fascinating" development of the fascinating art of broadcasting. Maps, statistics and push buttons were responses to a business necessity. Advertising agencies and their cynical time-buying executives did not surrender their doubts all at once simply because people thought Joe Penner was a scream or because "Little Orphan Annie" drew 173,456 letters and post cards in a contest. The first fact was the advertising agency attitude. The second fact, tailored to the first, was the maps, statistics and push buttons. Radio has by dint of these endeavors—and huge investments of money in research projects—quieted if not entirely silenced its worst critics and best customers.

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## CHAPTER X

### LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD UP TO DATE

ADVERTISERS found that a sizable portion of the radio audience consists of children. Appeals directed to youngsters were often very potent in results since the juvenile mind is apt to be a one-track mind. Junior wants the kind of cereal his radio hero eats and he will, unless he is a cowed child—and American children seldom are—settle for nothing less. But there was an unhappy side: the advertiser and broadcaster sometimes got involved in conflicts with parents, educators, child psychologists and clubwomen. A good deal of confused conversation naturally took place and nobody was quite sure where the truth or science lay. A common complaint was that certain five-a-week serials on the air left their juvenile listeners in a state of intolerable suspense until the next episode. Did Little Orphan Annie fall off the cliff, or didn't she? Nor was the answer necessarily given the next day. The program might continue to tease the listeners for several days, leaving Annie hanging there all the while.

This writer once conducted a questionnaire survey of parents. To the question, "Do your children write to radio programs?" sixty-eight replied that they did, seventy-one that they did not. To the corollary question, "Are your purchases influenced by your children?" sixty-four parents replied affirmatively, fifty-four negatively.

There seemed to be no unanimity of any one program or radio custom. One parent deplored "too much stress on gangster and crook type stories. The fact that it is intended to show that crime

does not pay does not affect children." Another wanted to know why *Treasure Island* and *Robin Hood* hadn't been used (they had) and thought radio ought to present "good likeable villains and not the sinister and gangster type." The father of three girls described radio programs for children as "a menace to my supper." He added, "They write for anything they can get for nothing." A mother complained, "Our child insists on eating at the card table by the radio. The programs are too exciting, but he won't listen if they aren't exciting. If children don't listen the products aren't sold. So, as far as I can see, there is nothing to be done about it."

"There are streaks when the whole neighborhood writes to some program," reported another mother of three. "Children writing to a sponsor are a terrible nuisance," sighed the mother of a ten-year-old girl. "Too many thrills on the radio make the child's own life seem uneventful." "We do not approve of blood and thunder. She listens to them but we detest . . . we aim not to buy products advertised." "The only programs I can safely let them hear are musical." Some appreciate radio taking the children from under foot and keeping them quiet. "I feel that the radio is a wonderful thing for children," reported a mother with an eleven-year-old. "I find when my boy gets interested in a program he doesn't care to be out in the streets or roaming around." But other parents had the opposite complaint. They wanted their children out of doors getting fresh air and exercise, but the children insisted on hugging the radio. A Unitarian clergyman thought children's programs created "artificial and lurid situations," which he considered unfortunate; he added that some children wrote to radio advertisers without telling their parents and, in some cases he had heard of, this occasioned embarrassment. The father of a Catholic family was indulgent about children hearing adult programs. "Most of the stuff adults worry about goes over their heads." His own brood of five wrote occasionally for combs, mirrors, baseball bats and other offerings but usually said nothing, fearing adults would consider them "silly." An unusual reply

stated: "In our family radio plays but a small part because we are radicals and our children daily absorb so much that runs counter to the radio blah-blah . . . . We all read Consumers' Union Reports and thus are saved from an overdose of radio propaganda."

The debate on children's programs raged for years. On the one side were the broadcasters and advertisers with considerable support from educators who believed that radio expanded the understanding of children, quickened their perceptions, familiarized them with current events, sharpened their powers of attention at an early age, improved their speech and vocabulary, excited an interest in foreign places. Against these views were the opposites: programs frightened, overexcited, upset children, caused nightmares, encouraged children to parrot silly, stupid catch phrases and converted them into nags who kept after their parents with shopping preferences about which their parents were properly the only judge.

At the outset, back in the early 1920's, radio attracted a swarm of imaginary uncles and aunts. Dorothy Gordon, herself a pioneer in the field, has pointed out that this was a world-wide phenomenon. America had its "Uncle Don"; English radio its "Uncle Robert"; German "Uncle Otto." It was Zio Giovanni in one country, Tante Lyddy, Zia Carola in others. The radio storyteller, the adults dedicated to bemusing the young fry, was universal.

The original "Uncle Don" in the United States is Don Carney of WOR, New York. He has carried on for years appealing to the lower age levels. As the dean of the radio uncles his patter has changed hardly at all in two decades of broadcasting. Parents write him letters giving him information. Uncle Don then announces over the air, "Now, today is the birthday of Willie Smith of 42 Sycamore Street, Staten Island, who has not been eating his vegetables the way he should. No, he hasn't. And he ought to. But his mama and his papa love him very much just the same, and if Willie will look behind the piano I think he'll find a present for his birthday." Of course the trouble with mentioning the birth-

days of children is that there are too many children and so Uncle Don can not oblige everybody. Many families are disappointed. All they can do of course is hope for a better break a year hence.

Ireene Wicker continued on the air about ten years as the "Singing Lady" and was much doted on by the mothers who warmly approved of her nursery rhymes interspersed with simple little skits. This of course was a far cry from the cliff hangers.

Various clubwomen began forming committees and passing resolutions about children's programs. They held well-publicized luncheons, handed out awards, viewed with alarm and in other ways underscored the whole subject of programs intended for children. Actually as the radio industry knew, and all parents as well, children by the millions tuned to so-called adult shows. Indeed there was much evidence that they preferred programs not consciously labeled juvenile. Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Rudy Vallee, Jack Pearl, Babe Ruth and "Witch's Tales" competed for their affections with "Skippy," Rin-Tin-Tin, "Lone Ranger," "Jack Armstrong" and "Buck Rogers in the Twenty-fifth Century."

Second only to "Uncle Don" in longevity was the Columbia series "Let's Pretend" as produced and written by Nila Mack. Another CBS attempt to meet objections was "Wilderness Road," which took a group of Americans including several children through the Cumberland Gap in the year 1787. This show was replete with the "educational" overlay on daily episode excitement which was so much recommended by certain critics.

NBC, CBS and ABC separately promulgated codes governing children's programs. NBC put it this way: No torture or suggestion of torture, no horror present or impending, no use of the supernatural or superstition likely to arouse fear, no profanity or vulgarity, no kidnaping or threats of kidnaping, no cliff hanging. The Columbia must-nots are stated as follows:

The exalting, as modern heroes, of gangsters, criminals, and racketeers will not be allowed.

Disrespect for either parental or other proper authority must not be glorified or encouraged.

Cruelty, greed and selfishness must not be presented as worthy motivations.

Programs that arouse harmful nervous reactions in the child must not be presented.

Conceit, smugness or unwarranted sense of superiority over others less fortunate may not be presented as laudable.

Recklessness and abandon must not be falsely identified with a healthy spirit of adventure.

Unfair exploitation of others for personal gain must not be made praiseworthy.

After its separation from NBC the whilom Blue (now ABC) Network adopted a children's program review code substantially similar to NBC and CBS practice. ABC conceded that "programs designed specifically for children reach impressionable minds and therefore must be based upon sound concepts and themes." A requirement was established that a detailed "story line" describing plot, dramatic action, locale and characters must be submitted by the advertiser for network approval six weeks before broadcast. Commercial copy, in addition to the usual adult restrictions which had become general throughout the industry, had, in the case of children's programs, to take especial care not to mislead or deceive. "No appeal may be addressed to children urging the necessity of purchasing a product in order to prevent the termination of the program. . . . No actor in a children's program, either in or out of character, may participate in any part of the program other than the story proper; nor may he be presented as endorsing the product advertised or be presented in connection with a prize or giveaway." About contests and offers directed to children ABC defined its attitude explicitly:

Contests and offers which encourage children to solicit box-tops or wrappers from strangers are not permitted.

Any offer or premium or prize that depends upon its alleged

"luck-bearing" powers for its attractiveness or which in any manner would encourage superstition or prove harmful to person or property, is not acceptable.

Appeals to children to help characters in a story by sending in box-tops or wrappers or purchasing a product and all other misleading devices of this character are unacceptable.

Full details concerning the formation of clubs, initiation requirements or secret codes proposed for any children's program must be submitted to the Company for approval at least ten business days before broadcast.

Any material which will be distributed in connection with the foregoing should be submitted for approval before purchase.

The company does not permit more than one advertiser at any one time to run a contest or an offer on a children's program.

Exceptional among children's programs is the "Quiz Kids," a half-hour developed in Chicago by Lou Cowan and sponsored by Alka-Seltzer. This program is heard Sunday nights at 7:30 EST over ABC. It presents five "prodigies" under the age of sixteen. Around three hundred different children have appeared on the program after careful screening. Each child participant receives a hundred-dollar U. S. bond as compensation. The public sends in questions. The sender of a question used on the air is awarded a Zenith radio set as prize, a small set if the "Quiz Kids" correctly answer it, a large de luxe model if the question stumps them. Lou Cowan recalls that eighteen advertisers rejected this program before a sponsorship was finally closed. Since then Cowan has information on at least fifty-two "carbon copies" of the program, including Cuban and Australian imitations. Cowan himself now has an arrangement with the Norwegian State Broadcasting Bureau for the establishment of a "Quiz Kids" in Norway and an ultimate exchange of youngsters between Norway and the United States. The special color and flavor of this children's program derive from the "educational showmanship" which is consistently brought to bear in planning and developing the entertainment. The "Quiz Kids"

have been pitted against atomic scientists, United States Senators, a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and all sorts of celebrities, including Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Eddie Cantor.

During the war years the "Quiz Kids" were conspicuously identified with sales drives for war bonds and were "credited" with \$125,000,000 in sales. Their tie-ups with the American Red Cross and other organizations all bespeak the promotional mentality at work. Perhaps the most arresting stunt of all was a contest among the children of the United States to select the most popular school-teacher in the country. Three college professors were employed by Cowan to sift the nominations, investigate the final winner and present her with \$1,000 in cash and a special postgraduate fellowship. What began as program showmanship ended by being an authentic contribution to pedagogic science, for the tens of thousands of letters from American schoolchildren represented a cross section of the young mind at work and told educators a great deal they had not previously known with such completeness of detail. These letters, after analysis by scholars, will appear in book form, to become part of the literature of pedagogy.

It is interesting to note that the Junior Leagues of America are in the forefront of the effort to adapt radio for small tots. National headquarters has a traveling representative, Julia Chandler, who encourages the local Junior Leagues to arrange broadcasts of special scripts with adult—Junior League—casts. Librarians, too, have taken a keen interest in radio programs for youngsters, especially when tied in with books available for young readers. Broadcasters are receptive enough, but they are somewhat gun-shy from having had more than a few unpleasant shocks from the "experts" in the past.

Public opinion, as made manifest through clubwomen and their luncheon speakers, has tended to have a depressant effect on sponsors. There is indeed a body of opinion in the business which frankly holds that the child audience is a snare and a delusion any-

how. It is argued that the small moppets cannot concentrate and the older ones who can concentrate prefer to giggle with Gildersleeve or sigh with Sinatra. It has been an aphorism of radio for the past ten years that children are allergic to children's programs. They pick their favorites among grown-up programs, to the consternation of adult lovers of nostalgic literature who are forever writing broadcasters to recommend *Robinson Crusoe* and *Black Beauty*.

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## CHAPTER XI

### THE PERSONALITY MARKET

HERE was something oddly deceptive and detached about the shop talk of radio-time salesmen, or so it seemed to the merchants of personality who thought that the office-manager type of mentality discussed sales, box tops, renewals, frequency discounts, tie-ups, jobbers, dealers, costs per thousand families—everything, in short, but the one thing that counted and that built up the big audiences which created the circulation which made the spot announcements, the chain breaks, the time signals, the participations profitable. It wasn't that the bookkeepers didn't know about personality but that they felt more comfortable in the realm of things they could understand, number and measure. They did not deny, when pressed, that radio was a great medium because radio was warm, friendly, amusing, intimate, or that people loved, respected, trusted and, out of gratitude, obeyed radio.

This matter of gratitude fascinated the business mind. It was something quite new in commercial calculations. Good will had been repeatedly marked up in the esteem of management during the first three decades of the century. It was now well understood that corporations could ill afford to operate in disregard of public opinion which, when adverse, ran up the incident of strike, boycott, regulation, investigation and smear. The ability of radio programs so to endear themselves to the public that the sponsor, the mere businessman, participated in its kindly feelings possessed a very practical appeal. Businessmen—being members of the human race despite all contention to the contrary—were definitely anxious to be well regarded rather than booed. More to the point, businessmen wanted to sell goods, and "gratitude" was not only good for good will but good for sales. Radio programs could convert a

stranger into a friend and that friend into a loyal consumer. This was why radio programs more and more tied the star into the advertising copy. It helped to have the entertainer endorse the pudding.

One of the networks actually attempted by psychological study and research to determine, as *Variety* reported the matter, "just what are the characteristics of a mike performer or an integrated program that stimulate the listener in wanting to do something in return for the pleasure derived from the personality or the program." There was also growing curiosity among the knowledgeable insiders of broadcasting concerning a paradox. There were radio programs which did not achieve a high popularity rating and yet every evidence pointed up a very pronounced improvement in sale. In short the radio businessman had got hold of a contradiction—the program that attracted fewer listeners but apparently sold those few much more effectively. "Among the programs listed by advertising agencies as notably having what it takes to inspire paydirt loyalty" *Variety* listed the following: "Fibber McGee and Molly," Jack Benny, "One Man's Family," Major Edward Bowes, "Amos 'n' Andy," Burns and Allen, Bing Crosby, Bob Burns, "Easy Aces," Kate Smith, Fred Allen, Bob Hope, "We, The People," "Information, Please" and "Lux Radio Theatre."

There was no dispute about the value of personality. But when it came to picking it there was constant disagreement. Especially did the "boy scouts" in the advertising agencies and the showmen along Broadway approach the problem differently. The gap between the conservatively tailored fraternity brothers from Dartmouth and Princeton and the sharp customers from the other side of Sixth Avenue was in part a social gap but it was also a matter of business conditioning. The admen said, in horror, "They don't *think* advertising." The showmen said, also in horror, "They don't *think* show business."

The "advertising mind" designed a program to sell. The "theatrical mind" designed a program to be entertaining. Actually in the

common sense of broadcast economics radio programs needed to accomplish both ends. They had to be entertaining to get audience—i.e., advertising circulation—in order to sell. One criticism of the "Pot o' Gold" program with the Horace Heidt Orchestra was that it was predominately "gimmick" and "sell" with very little entertainment. The orchestra was utilized merely as an interruption and stopgap between successive spinnings of a carnival-like wheel which picked by number first the telephone book, then the page, then the line on the page of some telephone subscriber somewhere in the United States who would thereupon be called long distance (while the orchestra played another selection); and if at home and listening to "Pot o' Gold" the subscriber would, simply by the act of answering the telephone, win \$1,000 in cash. This was an exaggeration case but it was nonetheless a test case of the difference in attitude. Admen tended to dote on "Pot o' Gold," admiring its ingenious development of excitement and cash giveaway in terms of repeated stress on the product, "Tums for the stomach." Showmen shook their heads. "It's like having bingo in a movie house and then not having a movie—just sticking to bingo," they complained.

Another example of the merchandising motivation at work will make this distinction perhaps even clearer. Some years ago a manufacturer of corsets turned to radio experimentally. The corset company sold its product on a door-to-door canvassing system. Some 5,000 saleswomen-fitters circulated incessantly about the country much in the manner of the Real Silk Hosiery and Fuller Brush salesmen who had become familiar to millions of homes. The corset company used radio to dissolve sales resistance, suspicion and doubt, the congenital fear of the stranger, the inclination to give an automatic "No" to the doorbell ringer. Through radio the company undertook the creation of favorable advance impressions of its staff, its product, its integrity. The advertising campaign was built around two jovial ex-vaudevillians, Ed East and Ralph Dumke, whose frolicsome "Sisters of the Skillet" had a wide

following among housewives. The East and Dumke program incorporated a limerick contest with cash prizes. The corset company equipped its saleswomen with a new opening line tied in with the broadcast. Corsetières got their toe into the door and, talking with the customary rapidity and sales charm, offered the housewives the following quick inducements: (a) blank forms on which to compete in the limerick contest; (b) membership cards enrolling the housewife in the "Sisters of the Skillet" Club; and (c) a free dishtowel.

House-to-house salesmanship is a hard routine. The drudging canvasser becomes discouraged by the odds and quits. Vacuum-cleaner salesmen, for example, had to average about thirty calls for every one sale and the ratio was equally high in many other lines. The corsetiers had worked out their techniques with a good deal of imagination. The whole idea was to establish a "we girls" atmosphere. The radio program prepared the way, sweetened the prospect. Each saleswoman wore one of the company's corsets and at the right moment could unzip her dress, step out and model the product for the housewife who was invited to visualize herself similarly stayed and looking like Claudette Colbert.

This corset approach to radio was, of course, far outside the ken of most box-office-minded showmen. For them the play was the thing in itself, but for the corset company and many another radio advertiser the play was not a thing in itself but a part of an overall strategy of distribution of merchandise. Not only was the radio program sometimes only one detail but it was often only one advertising medium among many used by the advertiser.

During 1934 the economic policies of the NRA brought a boom in old gold, jewelry, watches, and so on. In New York City a firm called Empire Gold-buying Company rushed into radio and, operating on a strictly opportunistic philosophy and against time, proceeded to demonstrate some astonishing acrobatics in the matter of last-minute purchases. Empire jumped on every bandwagon that came along. Maneuvering constantly for peak circulation, Empire

programs bobbed up before and after Presidential talks, Philharmonic concerts, Major Bowes's "Amateur Hour" (then a sustainer on WHN), prize fights and wherever the firm surmised a lot of spill-over audience would be available. The fast-thinking, fast-acting campaign produced excellent results. Of course such unorthodox and lone-wolf tactics are not for the run-of-the-mill radio advertiser.

Special opportunities do come along now and again that sponsors may seize. B. C. Remedy, for example, assigned Bugs Baer to the Republican National Convention of 1936 for a limited run as a gagging commentator. Philco shipped hundreds of dealers and officials to Havana, Cuba, for an all-stag blowout and sea-going sales convention one spring. Boake Carter went along and broadcast from the Furness Line steamer *Monarch of Bermuda* which was chartered for the occasion. It was a stunt in the grand manner.

Their ignorance of advertising and their whole insecurity in relation to an amusement world now dominated by movies and broadcasts—mechanized entertainments—preyed on the minds of show people generally. The business of being funny, of entertaining the public, was changing so rapidly that men and women still young found themselves hopelessly out of date, trained to a style of working that was no longer in demand. Actually it was the talking moving picture more than radio that had shipwrecked so many vaudeville entertainers. These performers could be discovered any sunny day airing themselves on "the beach" (as they called it) along the curbstones near the Palace Theatre in Times Square. They were afflicted with a desperate if esoteric form of technological unemployment. Joe Schoenfel writing in *Variety* during 1933 gave the somber facts:

In 1926, a year before the sound era was ushered in, there were 2,000 vaudefilm houses in the U. S., besides 28 straight vaudeville theatres. Eighteen of the latter were on the Keith Circuit in the east, the other 10 on the Orpheum time. Around 6,500 acts found

more work than they could use in the 2,000 vaudefilmers, while the strictly vaudeville spots played an average of 220 acts weekly.

When it's considered from where vaudeville started to slide, it's hard to imagine that it could have fallen so far so quickly. In less than seven years vaudeville has been reduced from 2,000 vaudefilmers and 28 strictly variety houses to less than 50 weeks in all over the entire country. There hasn't been a continuous straight vaude theatre in the United States for almost four years, and even the most rabid vaude optimist has given up all hope of there ever being one again.

To many an anxious vaudevillian radio offered a possible "new career" to replace the one just ended. But it was not easy to move into radio. Apart from the economics the entertainment setup was basically different. Radio played to an unseen audience. It was one-dimensional. Sight business was lost. Pantomime, make-up, scenery, all effects which were not purely aural were meaningless. There were a special style and pace for the air. Worst of all, radio was a monster down whose always open gullet a lifetime of vaudeville material could vanish in a few weeks, leaving the performer with nothing more to offer.

Not the least part of the uneasiness of the Broadway professionals when they turned to radio was their enforced subservience to young men recently out of college who were in charge of the radio departments of the advertising agencies. Some of these chaps were indeed presumptuous young upstarts who ought to have had the sense to learn from their betters. But others were knowledgeable of advertising and radio needs and had a right, in their turn, to resent the snap judgments of many a Broadwayite.

Events pretty well proved during the ten years' period after about 1927 that vaudeville entertainers were oversimplifying radio. It was not simple. It was only simple-seeming. Radio freely adapted and borrowed from vaudeville but it was not vaudeville. It was another problem.

But the men of Broadway were right in their basic insistence.



The all-important tubes

Courtesy of "Let's Listen to a Story"

A Juvenile Literary Tea



Personality made the medium, built the ratings. People tuned in to hear people. That was demonstrated in the first year or two of broadcasting. The original custom had been to identify radio announcers by call letters alone. Milton J. Cross was simply "AJN" at the old Station WJZ, while Bertha Brainard was "ABN." That sort of anonymity was distasteful to the public who wanted living names, not meaningless initials. Announcers preceded entertainers and so came to radio fame earlier. By 1925 probably a dozen of the best-known announcers were quite literally national celebrities, and all of them not on the basis of fine diction but of engaging personality, as for example, Harold Hough, "The Hired Hand" of WBAP, Fort Worth; Lambdin Kay, "The Little Colonel" of WSB, Atlanta; George Hay, "The Solemn Old Judge" of WLS, Chicago. An early radio award given by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences for the encouragement of pure English came, in the end, to be no business asset to winners, but a dubious label on them. To have the American Academy think one pure of tone and orthodox of pronunciation was to stand accused of elocution and vocal primness. Announcers cherished instead the backslap of the mob. It was better to win a cup for being popular with the homefolks, like Graham McNamee and Pat Barnes, than to be acclaimed by the tutors of speech.

Two of the big personality deals in the early years involved Mary Garden and Marion Davies. Mary Garden had been made director general of the then moribund Chicago Opera Company and she desperately needed some new exploitation method to rekindle enthusiasm for lyrical drama in the Windy City. There were perhaps fewer than 2,000 radio sets in Chicago in 1922 when Miss Garden's opera broadcasts began on Westinghouse's brand-new KYW. The publicity caused a boom in set sales and also helped attendance at the opera house. When the opera season ended, listening and set sales promptly dropped. Meanwhile in New York City it was deemed sensational when Mineralva Beauty Mud-Pack proclaimed that it would sponsor the Zeigfeld beauty

(and future film star) Miss Marion Davies, and pay her the then fabulous radio fee of \$300 per week.

In the days before advertising sponsorship became general, radio stations usually could offer talent no pay other than "publicity." That might suffice for one or two trial appearances. Eddie Cantor broadcast gratis as early as 1922, as did many another Broadway headliner, but they became increasingly unwilling to donate their talent. The job of the program manager of short-lived WDY in Roselle Park, New Jersey, was to entice busy New York theatrical personages not only to give their services "for free" but to make a long trip to studios in another state. WDY did what it could to appear irresistible. They called the station "that cute castle of cordiality" and promised a "chic and cozy atmosphere" with sandwiches and coffee after the broadcast. Alas, poor WDY, the sandwiches were not enough. There was better salami closer to Times Square.

The oldest, the original, so to speak, formula for a radio program was an orchestra and a singer or singers. Of such were the early schedules made. Instance: the A & P Gypsies, Ipana Troubadours, B. A. Rolfe, Champion Sparkers, Cliquot Club Eskimos. The showmanship then consisted in dressing the orchestra members in fancy costumes, not in introducing comedians. Sarnoff has spoken of the "radio music box" and publicity references were habitually made to radio "concerts" rather than radio revues. The music program had many natural advantages over comedy, novelty and drama. It was comparatively simple, it was time-verified, fool-proof. There was general agreement as to talent. Musicianship was a knowable thing. There were few important or disturbing controversies in the standard musical repertoires. A stage play like Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* or Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* could cause riots. Comedians could depart from the text and go "blue" to the embarrassment of part of an audience. Dramatists insisted upon dealing with social issues. Yes, well-bred music had many charms for the sponsor, among them:

1. A varied catalog of musical selections will probably provide something to please everybody.
2. Comparatively few individuals among humanity in the mass ever profess utter and complete indifference to all and any music.
3. It is possible to know the verdict of (a) time and tradition, and (b) professional critics and concert fees where deluxe musicians or soloists are concerned; or, in the case of dance music, to know (a) the box office, phonograph sales, best selling standings, and (b) the general acceptance of either compositions or organized units.
4. Music requires a minimum of production beyond the arrangements and rehearsals which are an integral part of musicianship. Additions and deletions, lengthening or shortening to meet time requirements can be made with very little fuss.

Carrying this a step further it is evident that music has the further advantage of symbolic and sentimental associations. Programs designed to appeal to the Irish, the Germans, the Poles, Southerners, high-brows or to college addicts of hotcha can be readily put together by almost any music librarian. Music "fits" occasions, holidays, seasons, sections. Consider the association of ideas implicit in such tunes as these:

- "Jingle Bells" (Christmas)
- "Canadian Capers" (skating)
- "My Pony Boy" (Western)
- "School Days" (children)
- "Yes, We Have No Bananas" (foreign peddlers)
- "Alias Jimmy Valentine" (burglars)
- "Give My Regards to Broadway" (New York nostalgia)
- "In the Good Old Summertime" (picnics, parks)
- "Bicycle Built for Two" (The Gay Nineties)

Between the extremes of high-brow and mountain music and away from the passing parade of tin-pan alley's brief skyrockets, there exists that giant reservoir of beloved music to which many

generations and many songwriters have contributed, embracing, to allude only to a few, such composers as Victor Herbert, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Rudolph Friml, Franz Lehar, Oscar Strauss, Carrie Jacobs Bond, Ethelbert Nevin, etc.

However, the wherewithal to pay high-priced comedians came soon enough. Quite early in the game the team of Moran and Mack headed a weekly program reputedly budgeted at \$7,000 a week. If audiences (i.e. advertising circulation) could be delivered by the millions-of-families, then lavish-seeming compensation for the magic personalities that could turn the trick were actually nominal. But this was not an easy idea for many a business man to assimilate. Having contracted for time and stations the sponsor in due course found that he usually needed to add about twenty-five percent to forty percent for talent. That included star, stooges, musicians, arrangers, writers, director and so on. Joe Penner inquired, "Wanna buy a duck?" Ten million kids echoed him. Starting price for Joe Penner: \$2,500. Richard Crooks sang a brace of songs. Cost to advertiser: \$4,000. Fred Astaire, a dancer, got \$4,500 on the radio where people could only hear, not see, him dance. Even a simple little contrivance for the amusement of children, "Popeye the Sailor," was budgeted, exclusive of network costs, at \$5,000, and without a star.

Quotations of this sort often terrified the neophyte sponsor. In his own business experience the head of a company might, after forty years of hard work, get \$50,000 a year. In show business he found \$50,000 was often considered merely the interim recompense of a promising beginner or a has-been now supposedly on the skids. Oh, to be a promising beginner or a has-been!

It took a bit of adjusting, too, when the hired comedian who had never gone to Harvard informed the president of the corporation who had that he was a goon about jokes. The comedian might be right but that didn't make it any easier for the president of the corporation who was accustomed to a certain deference to his views. Broadway to a man jeered when one Detroit executive can-

celed Jack Benny early in his career on the grounds that Benny wasn't funny and besides he, the executive, preferred old waltzes. Another prominent comedian in his quarrels with the man who paid the bills delighted in embarrassing his opponent after the broadcast portion was over by telling his audience in the studio (not on the air) that certain jokes had been ordered out of the script. "Now, folks, I'll let you judge for yourselves," the comedian would say and then proceed to use the *verboten* gags. Invariably screams of laughter reassured his ego and upset the sponsor. Not that the demonstration proved a thing.

All sorts of personages were introduced to the radio audience in the hope they would catch on with the public. There was a line of autobiographical programs. The former silent-film star, Francis X. Bushman, discussed events in his life. The program sponsored by Armour's opened with Bushman and his valet recalling the good old days and then faded into a dramatized incident. Lumbermen's Mutual Insurance sponsored "The Life of Mary McCormick" supposedly founded upon the opera singer's own career. D. W. Griffith, pioneer motion-picture director of "Birth of a Nation" and "Intolerance," also starred in a semi-autobiographical stanza sponsored by Hinds' Honey and Almond Cream. Another man-telling-his-own-life program starred the jungle animal trapper Frank Buck.

Wherein doth personality lie? There were many theories but none could be guaranteed. How explain the dry vinegary wit of Fred Allen, the whoopsy lilt of Beatrice Lillie, the soft tone of resignation exploited by Frank Fay, the tart-sweet verbosity and syllable-exact prissiness of Alexander Woollcott?

In the constant quest of personality the radio industry set up shop in Hollywood during 1932. Previously the cost of lines and the four-hour continental time differential had kept the Pacific Coast separated. Now the cry was for film stars with "prefabricated popularity." A few years later *Variety* was reporting, "It looks like one guest star per program is no longer considered

enough." Radio was emulating Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer which usually loaded any film with three, four or five stars.

The high-water mark was set when the Kellogg Company of Battle Creek sponsored a Hollywood origination entitled "The Circle" with a weekly talent payroll of some \$28,000. It was described by one critic as "a night-time, big-time, lovely-time spree." As quoted at the time the personality costs per program were as follows: Ronald Colman, \$5,000; Carole Lombard, \$5,000; Cary Grant, \$4,000; Groucho and Chico Marx, \$4,000; Lawrence Tibbett, \$5,000. Orchestra, quartet, conductor, arrangements, writers, director made up the balance.

This sort of thing cast a chill over many a business mind. Economical alternatives to high-powered personalities were increasingly sought. Audience participations became numerous. Small cost for talent, use of cash prizes, avoidance of fixed charges for union music all represented an attractive contrast to Hollywood grandeur for the advertiser who had to keep his radio budget down.

The "idea programs" (games, stunts, giveaways, quizzes) had one disadvantage. They ran afoul of priority claims of origination far more than did other types of radio shows. A new audience-participation program had only to be produced or announced to draw remonstrances from a local station, a free-lance producer, or the lawyers thereof, in another section of the country. "We did it first—we're still doing it—use it and we'll sue!" Or "unless you stop cease and desist we'll take action." For this reason idea shows were sometimes rushed in prematurely before they had been properly worked out merely to establish radio priority. The sort of program which pits teams of competing contestants for prizes, laughs and parlor-type amusement has remained popular for years now. At one point such a program costing \$900 was directly opposite a regulation program of professional entertainers costing \$9,000. The popularity rating for a time favored the \$900 quiz battle. This invidious comparison was duly exploited in the

trade by those whose self-interest was served thereby but wiser minds pointed out that such comparisons were out of context, glib rather than conclusive, and proved nothing in particular except perhaps that the \$9,000 show was not as good as it should be. Certainly it didn't prove that an audience-participation program was automatically a better buy than a more costly galaxy of professional talent. To argue that was to argue that amateurs excel professionals. If that were true they would become professionals.

Program building became an art by 1937. There was a backlog of trial and error. Quite a lot was known about public taste. The industry had become more sure of itself. Money was more scientifically spent. There was less guesswork, less razzle-dazzle as between the buyer and seller of entertainment. Each was beginning to understand the other's problems and parlance. This was the last "normal" year before the war shadows gathered. The record shows these programs on the networks in 1937:

**ACME WHITE LEAD.** Paint company combined Ed McConnell—"Smiling Ed"—with Irma Glenn. She played the organ and there was Palmer Clark's orchestra. Entertainment was pitched in a reverential semichurchy tone, obviously aiming to please and attract middle-aged and elderly folks—those who were apt to own private dwellings and could be listed as prospects for a paint job. McConnell's personality was the keystone of the whole formula. Combining a happy singing style, a he-mannish voice of strong melodic appeal with a sort of joyous Sunday-school-superintendent-speaking manner that robbed the commercial of its odium, he made it all seem a chummy, neighborly heart-to-heart talk about how badly the old manse needed to be spruced up. Sunday at 5:30 P.M. over NBC Red was considered an ideal time for the broadcast.

**AMERICAN CAN.** Ben Bernie's orchestra as an orchestra was satisfactory but not eminent. It was Ben Bernie the personality that counted. Prior to his spectacular click over the air Bernie had been a fairly prominent wisecracking bandsman who often played in

vaudeville. Up to the time radio provided him with a magic carpet of fame Bernie was ranked a good Palace act and a fair hotel dance orchestra.

Bernie's success on the air catapulted his catch phrases and twisted English into household expressions. "Yowsir," "Youse guys and youse gals," "The mostah of the bestah," and similar Bernie-isms spread like wildfire and the popularity of his broadcasts speedily attracted sponsorship. First a beer company and later the manufacturer of tin containers for beer carried Bernie into the big money and his program into a long-time popularity.

**AMERICAN HOME PRODUCTS.** This sponsor had several radio shows. One, on NBC, "Easy Aces," advertised Anacin. On Columbia, "Broadway Varieties" advertised Bi-so-dol, while (Ted) Hammerstein's "Music Hall" underlined Kolynos Toothpaste. Of the three, "Easy Aces" was the best example of radio showmanship.

Goodman Ace, a Kansas City newspaper columnist and wit, progressed from local radio programs over WHB and KMBC in Kansas City to Chicago and finally to New York. Meanwhile he and his wife Jane created a make-believe married couple who became very popular over the air. Ace provided the continuity and the gags—both notable for naturalness and originality, a combination always rare in show business.

Saying nothing of the sufficiently remarkable circumstance that an inland-city newspaper columnist and his nonprofessional wife should develop into network actors, the showmanship of the Aces was built around the dumb remarks and unconscious humor of the wife character. This exploited the universal familiarity of the husband who struggles in vain to implant masculine logic in the feminine brain gardens. Again it's the same report: what counts is that intangible thing, personality.

Hammerstein's "Music Hall" was a formula for a variety program. It borrowed from the traditions of the past and sentimentalized old-time performers. Programs of this character suffice but are never leaders in the popularity parade.

**AMERICAN RADIATOR.** This show answered to the description "Fireside Recitals." It was Sunday-night music for the older home-owning gentry.

**AMERICAN TOBACCO.** George Washington Hill was notable from the beginning as one sponsor that had a definite flair for showmanship. One of his early production prescriptions called for "nothing but choruses of nothing but hits and all in fast tempo." Projected by B. A. Rolfe, this policy thrived for a time only to pall. The public found the steady gallop enervating; a modification of the formula was adopted.

In 1937 American Tobacco had music shows on both CBS and NBC. Hill's philosophy was to confine his orchestras to the fifteen (later reduced to seven because of publisher objections) popular music hits of the day which best-selling figures confirmed as the public's expressed preference. It was also a condition of Hill's radio showmanship that the orchestras themselves should be frequently alternated and that no conductor-personality should ever be permitted to dominate or stand out above the program identification with Lucky Strikes.

An elaborate sweepstakes contest which was in reality a device for distributing samples was added to the program in 1937.

**ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC.** Chain stores, in September 1936, dropped Harry Horlick and his "A & P" Gypsies after sponsoring the program for ten years. After that John Hartford group relied upon big, jolly Kate Smith to push its coffee sales.

Already Kate Smith was a study in radio showmanship. Dressed up in a calico bungalow apron, she presided on the platform in enormous auditoriums for the company parties the A & P staged in various cities to stimulate sales enthusiasm and organizational morale. These "free shows" were valued by A & P as a device for closing the wide chasm between the home-office hierarchy and neighborhood clerks and store managers.

As an actual broadcaster Kate Smith combined an unctuous gift for popular songs (and semiclassics) with a cheery inspirational

home-folksy sort of manner. Wisely her manager Ted Collins modified and improved the original "syrup" mixture so that it was pleasant without being too sugary.

**ATLANTIC REFINING.** Philadelphia oil company with an uneven distribution map mostly confined to the Atlantic seaboard area sought out radio advertising largely because other refiners were on the air and an offset against this competitive advantage was necessary. N. W. Ayer agency worked out a mythical tour whereby the fictional "Atlantic Family" visited various towns and events within the sponsor's trading zone. Each week some particular allusions were incorporated into the script. One week, for example, the party "visited" the famous Danbury, Connecticut, Fair.

Motoring about at will with a wisp of a story and a hint of romance between a daughter of the Atlantic Family and tenor star Frank Parker, the program introduced celebrities from outside show business (football coaches, etc.) and had a habit of encountering guest stars who, urged by Frank Parker, would strut their stuff.

Finally after many alterations and shifts the program simmered down into a comedy formula with Bob Hope, Honey Chile, Four Songsmiths and Red Nichols' Orchestra.

**BABBITT COMPANY.** A morning program five days a week dramatized an old-time yarn in which a kindly motivated hornswoggler, David Harum, customarily outsmarted less amiable traders who sought to rob widows and orphans. Same character served Will Rogers in movies and was standard Americana.

**BRISTOL-MYERS.** Fred Allen program ran an hour and divided its commercial messages to the public between Sal Hepatica and Ipana Toothpaste. While not universal the habit of mentioning more than one trade-mark name or product on a single program was fairly common. Agencies and sponsors were convinced that the dangers of confusion were not too dreadful and in any event the commercial copy was purposely written to make it sun-clear.

Vaudeville trained and musical comedy polished Fred Allen.

The author of much of his own humor, this veteran trouper brought to radio further proof that it's always personality.

We are frequently amazed and impressed by the fidelity of mimics to the originals. Voice mannerisms, gestures, verbiage—all the characteristic externals—are simulated. But only for a few minutes, only with borrowed material is the illusion maintained. Copy acts are always just that. Fred Allen was frequently mimicked, but never emulated.

An interesting contrast in showmanship was seen in the manner in which Fred Allen handled amateurs as against the procedure adopted by Major Bowes. Allen had the actor's spoofing style; Bowes was the Rotarian big brother, a wee mite the doctor of divinity. Allen was light, breezy, purely entertainment. Bowes had a "mission." In December 1936 Allen's amateurs were changed into "newcomers." Allen became a philosopher working for the Western Vaudeville Managers Association.

CALUMET BAKING POWDER. Phillips Lord put together a program called "We, the People," composed of Ripleyesque oddities, bits of calculated pathos (as an orphan boy put up for adoption over the air) and the whimsies of quaint Americans (for instance, a blacksmith with a theory that men should pick wives as they pick horses—by their feet). Program asked to hear from persons with something unusual to tell the public, and the sponsors (General Foods) provided traveling expenses for those nominated to talk over the air. One of the best of the stunt programs.

CAMPBELL's. F. Wallis Armstrong agency of Philadelphia had its client Campbell's using radio for two products—soup and tomato juice. Soup's setup, one of the first big network shows from the film colony, was "Hollywood Hotel." Program used guest stars but did not pay for them. Some three hundred newspapers syndicating the daily column of Louella Parsons gave to Miss Parsons the ability to get film stars to donate their services, a practice subsequently prohibited by the Screen Actors' Guild.

Campbell's received the prestige value of costly film personali-

ties at a nominal expense of about \$1,500 weekly to Miss Parsons herself, who had a very small part in the actual broadcast. Her fee represented her influence.

Burns and Allen, also from vaudeville, starred for the tomato-juice account. (Shifted to Grapenuts sponsorship in April 1937.)

CARBORUNDUM. Niagara Falls Company returned regularly every autumn with band music plus the Indian legends of the north New York country. Program was an early Saturday evening divertissement that was quietly enjoyable and had a strong appeal to those who do not dedicate the week's end to cracked ice and associated ingredients. Carborundum's advertising manager, Francis Bowman, did the talk and did it well. He was a holdover from an earlier epoch in radio when executives made a habit of broadcasting personally. Most of them were very bad. That's why most of them are no longer heard.

CARNATION MILK. This program dished out warm and rich melody. An orchestra-with-philosophy program.

CHASE AND SANBORN. Station WMCA, New York, originated a novelty that over a year's time became recognized as packed with listener appeal. "Court of Good Will" was the title. Macfadden Publications was first to sponsor it. With the magazine outfit the appeal was obvious—"true stories" were stock in trade with them. The "Court" dealt with authentic cases of confused and unhappy souls who came before the microphone—protected by anonymity—and stated their cases before "guest judges"—real members of the judiciary who donated their broadcasting fee to charity.

The "Court of Good Will," in its original form, was provocative as a study in what radio can do. Despite the mercenary objectives of station and sponsor the material in the vein of the Legal Aid Society was close to the heart of humanity. Its emotional impact was unquestioned. Yet by the same token this very exploitation of human emotion and—of necessity—human ignorance (majority of cases were poor and perplexed proletarians, many speaking broken English) brought out bar-association opposition and ulti-

mately killed the program. Thereafter coffee roaster had "Do you Want to be an Actor?" (a flop) and then switched allegiance to W. C. Fields and Edgar Bergen.

**CHRYSLER.** Major Edward Bowes took a discredited and faded device of show business and made a sensational success on the networks. It was all like new to the new generation. His earning capacity as a result recalled Aladdin of the Lamp.

In an America with a fixation on unemployment Major Bowes was considered a benefactor. He offered to open the door of opportunity to the young and the obscure. And millions of Americans thought it nice of him.

**CITIES SERVICE.** A venerable broadcast entertainment. Jessica Dragonette raised her flutelike soprano for many years, to be replaced in 1937 by Lucille Manners. Commercial copy personalized the company, developed the program's anniversaries, talked about its members. The formula was trite but the performance was not.

**COLGATE-PALMOLIVE-PEET.** For Palmolive soap a community sing stanza relied upon Billy Sunday's one-time whooper-upper, Homer Rodeheaver. This show demanded audience participation and illustrated the type of program that ties in those in the immediate presence of the microphone.

"Gang Busters" obviously exploited the glorified G-man. It publicly acclaimed the Federal Department of Justice, especially in kidnaping cases. Cops and robbers. At moderate cost.

Third Colgate-Palmolive-Peet show is from California, a combination fiction story and religious picnic called "The Goose Creek Parson." Religion and hymn singing has previously opened the door to many a parlor for American manufacturers and distributors.

**CONTINENTAL BAKING.** Continental Baking over a hookup of Mutual stations carried out a gaslight-era conception of satirized melodramas. Tintype and gay-nineties stuff found a certain popularity in vaudeville and night clubs, etc. Numerous motion pictures, including Mae West classics, exploited the quaint rococo

charms of Grandpa's day. Revivals of "The Drunkard" and pieces such as "Murder in the Old Red Barn" provided the public with legitimatized opportunities to hoot and poke fun at the entertainment.

In the presentation of the first broadcast Continental Baking hired Carnegie Hall, New York, and dressed up the cast in costumes and otherwise sought to exploit the occasion with memorable trappings.

DUPONT. "Cavalcade of America" dramatized hard-working Yankees, the kind who move west, not left.

FIRESTONE. Another straight musical session. In this as in many similar programs the personal taste of the company boss or the company's inherently conservative policies dictated almost inevitably that refinement and "better music" should be used. Firestone specialized in vocal ensembles.

FORD. Slow to accept radio but enthusiastic in using it thereafter, Henry Ford's main program was in charge of Fred Waring. Only superficially a dance orchestra, Waring's Pennsylvanians cost Ford a lot of money but delivered a show that suited Ford's personal taste and enough other Americans to rate it successful. Its glee club and novelty angles, including a froglike yodel from the drummer as a comedy touch, composed a complete entertainment although occasionally guest performers were brought in.

Ford sponsored World's Series baseball broadcasts, symphony and tango music also. (To succeed Waring, Ford had Al Pearce and "Universal Rhythm.")

GENERAL FOODS. Maxwell Show Boat (Benton & Bowles) and Jack Benny's "Jello" program (Young & Rubicam) were both pretentious. Experiments were attempting to widen the appeal of the "Show Boat," a consistently popular entertainment for several years that seems to have ended up as an old folks' clambake. In 1937 it had to meet opposition of Major Bowes's "Amateur Hour" at same time.

"Show Boat" sailed into mythical harbors. In several reported

instances the public took literally broadcast announcements that "Next week we visit Erie, Pennsylvania," etc., and went to the docks waiting for the "Show Boat" to present itself. A compound of music, chatter, minstrel-type humor, and a romantic thread created the "Show Boat" pattern—a pattern widely recognized as typically radio, circa 1937. Lanny Ross was the biggest success story of the program although other individuals such as Sam Hearn achieved substantial prominence. "Log Cabin Dude Ranch" by the same agency employed a similar showmanship formula.

Jack Benny, of course, was an example of how it's done, not what's done. He developed a pat system of comedy construction that skyrocketed the "Jello" program into first-rank popularity.

**GENERAL MILLS.** The Minneapolis concern gave the prime exemplar of a definite theory of radio showmanship. It used low-cost serials for daylight broadcasting; relied a good deal on premiums and stunts and baseball broadcasts in summer. Its morning hour on CBS was subdivided into sections devoted to fiction, recipes, news. But mostly fiction.

At twilight "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy," baited the lads over nine and under fifteen by permitting them to identify themselves with a super-adolescent who won football games as a matter of course, broke up gangs of kidnapers, aided Uncle Sam in uncovering various nefarious enterprises. Secret doings, haunted castles, magical talisman and whatnot.

**GENERAL SHOE.** Sponsored an orchestra headed by Phil Harris.

**GILLETTE SAFETY RAZOR.** This company tried radio along novelty lines on several occasions. It had Max Baer on the radio when Max Baer was a celebrity. Gillette's community sing supported Milton Berle, Wendell Hall, Jones and Hare.

**GOOD GULF GASOLINE.** Comedian Phil Baker and snappy dancer Hal Kemp were the main ingredients of a variety-type review. Baker, from vaudeville, used stooges. One of them, a disembodied voice, broke in with flip "Get off the air!"

**GOODYEAR TIRE.** Braved the tempest by sponsoring Literary

Digest poll on Roosevelt-Landon straw votes prior to election of 1936.

**HECKER-H-O.** Cereals aimed at children, the authority for many a family's choice of breakfast food. "Bobby Benson" was a snappy youngster who did things, went places and met interesting people. In the person of boy actor Billy Halop, the serial hero, he materialized at the circus and rodeo in Madison Square Garden, New York. (This show folded after five years.)

**H. J. HEINZ.** The Pittsburgh food packer presented a morning "Magazine of the Air" formula. An editor presided as a master of ceremonies à la Alexander Woollcott. There were "features" and "continued stories" and "food talks" and midway in the program the orchestra did a medley called a "double truck."

Pretending to be something else was typical of many radio programs so the "magazine" analogy wasn't important. More interesting, because less common, was the Heinz experiment of using personalities predominantly from the lecture-platform world. Thus college professors and novelists, grand duchesses and literary cream puffs were given to a morning audience of housewives.

**HORLICK'S.** Lum and Abner, a rural pair of eccentrics, provided the entertainment for this manufacturer of malted milk. Numerous exploitation stunts were developed, such as renaming a hamlet in Arkansas to correspond to the name of the watering trough in the script.

Lum and Abner were kindly and amusing, full of innocent plotting and the idiom of way down yonder.

**HOUSEHOLD FINANCE.** Domestic banking gave the radio public "Sherlock Holmes" over the Mutual network but was chiefly identified with the moralizing poetry of the Detroit bard, Edgar A. Guest.

**HUDSON COAL.** A seasonal advertiser. Small-budget program numbered Colonel Jim Healy, a gent with the gift of gab, and the Landt Trio and White, harmony group—light and lilty diversion.

**JERGEN'S.** Walter Winchell dished the dirt.

**JOHNSON & SON.** "Fibber McGee" was comedy slapstick in serial-story form. It was off the beaten path largely because of the odd personalities involved. Came ahead strongly in 1936-1937.

**KELLOGG.** "Singing Lady" (Irene Wicker) went after the younger kids via the ingratiating jingle route. Avoiding goose-pimple melodrama, program sought deliberately to make the most of its freedom from objectionable excitement by inviting the gratitude of parents. Kellogg also extensively sponsored college football.

**KNOX GELATINE.** Morning program depended on Ed East and Ralph Dumke who disported themselves in a style somewhere between jollity and dementia. There were a tenor and an orchestra. It was a fifteen-minute meringue for housewife consumption.

**KRAFT-PHENIX.** A pretentious variety revue using guest stars and name figures was characterized by its flip smartness, "relaxed dialog" and Bing Crosby.

**LADY ESTHER.** Stylized waltz music by Wayne King was united with Phil Stewart, a romantic-voiced announcer.

**LEVER BROTHERS.** The soap company sponsored a number of programs for its several brands (plus Spry, a cooking grease). Of these shows the "Lux Theatre of the Air," from the film colony, was eminently successful and a standout example of radio showmanship. Rotation of guest stars from among Hollywood's roster of marquee illuminati provided the name attraction. But the sponsor did not stop with the booking of celebrated performers and the creation of a literary vehicle. Every trick in the showman's book was used to tie the program, its headliners, the Hollywood environment together. A famous film director, Cecil B. DeMille, was used on the program (he didn't actually direct the broadcast) to discuss the play and the players, to ballyhoo the next week's program (repeat listening) to call attention to well-known figures in the invited studio audience.

Subtly and cleverly the program trimmings built an atmosphere of intimacy with Hollywood's great ones; carefully and unmis-

takably the illusion was furthered that practically every good-looking girl in the film colony used Lux soap.

**LYSOL.** Dr. Alan Dafoe of Dionne quintuplet fame talked from Ontario. He did not advertise Lysol but the announcer who spoke just before and just after him made it clear who was sponsoring. Babies and mothers were the chief concern of the doctor's talks. And his reputation was a good guarantee of an audience.

A miniature orchestra under Lindsay McPhail wove a mood of nursery music through the program. And Ruth Carhart sang.

**MILES LABORATORIES.** Alka-Seltzer sponsored the "Barn Dance" of Station WLS, Chicago, an adaptation in the interests of advertising of rural taste and tradition in entertainment. It mingled hillbilly and prairie songs, guitar, blow-jug and jew's-harp music, square dances and hayseed humor. Carried over the network, the sodbuster stuff by no means lacked charm for many city folks who never saw a farm except on Thanksgiving post cards.

Quaintness marked the "Uncle Ezra" program conducted by Pat Barrett. A whimsical old duffer operated an imaginary radio station, E-Z-R-A, "the powerful little five-watter down in Rosedale."

**MOLLÉ.** Parks Johnson and Jerry Belcher were brought north from a radio station in Houston, Texas. Their contribution to Americans-on-the-air consisted in posing conundrums, riddles and brain twisters to contestants brought to the microphone. Sample of product was given each person quizzed.

**NASH-LAFAYETTE.** Floyd Gibbons plus the Vincent Lopez orchestra. Gibbons employed a speedy delivery as if crowding in every syllable against the clock. It was a he-man approach to the headlines.

**NATIONAL BISCUIT.** This was a mixed bag in which Rose Marie Brancato sang arias and Helen Claire headed the dramatic casts for playlets. Later this formula was dropped in favor of Helen Broderick, Victor Moore, Buddy Rogers.

**PACIFIC BORAX.** "Death Valley Days" was a formula of tall tales of the old frontier.

**PACKARD.** Against advice Fred Astaire signed a contract with

Packard. Pessimists pointed out several dangers: (a) an hour is too long for a program of the kind Packard had in mind, and (b) too frequent radio appearances might lessen popular appetite for Astaire films. And the films, not a paltry \$200,000 from Packard, loomed as the really important fact in the dancer's career.

With Astaire went Charles Butterworth, ingratiating lunatic, assorted guest stars, and Johnny Green's Orchestra, which under the prodding and inspiration of rhythm-genius Astaire sounded much better than the year before with Jack Benny.

**PEPSODENT.** First of the enduring personality successes of radio, Amos 'n' Andy made millions believe in their make-believe. Black-face pair were once a national obsession. In their time their catch phrases passed into the everyday speech of Americans. Among these may be cited "Hold the phone," as a commentary upon an unexpected situation or conversational crisis.

**PHILCO.** Boake Carter had a clear, clipped, individualized delivery. A minority couldn't abide him but in general he well served the purposes of Philco, was slick at insinuating the commercial copy into the running comment on news and keeping the product down front.

**PROCTOR & GAMBLE.** P & G had its "Gospel Singer" (Edward MacHugh) as that other big daytime sponsor, General Mills, had its "Hymns of all Churches." P & G also had Jimmy Fidler peddling film gossip at night but essentially the Cincinnati firm doted on five-a-week quarter-hour episodic drama.

**QUAKER OATS.** "Kaltenmyer's Kindergarten" was reminiscent of "The Nine Crazy Kids," "School Days," "Buster Brown" and other pieces of a similar epoch. The schoolmaster was a slapstick comedy character with a gutteral German accent. Familiar types, drawn with broad strokes, included tough guys, tattletales and polysyllabic high-brow Bostonian kid.

**RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA.** Pretentious midafternoon Sunday hour used spot names. There were numerous geographical jumps, sometimes international. Switch-overs emphasized the engineering pre-eminence claimed for the radio receivers of the

company. A program of varied and often daring mechanical novelties was linked to splendid talent.

REGIONAL ADVERTISERS. This group underwrote "The Mystery Chef" (John McPherson), a man in a woman's specialty. Household hints and recipes were standard radio fare providing a direct and logical tie-in with foodstuffs, etc.

R. J. REYNOLDS. Chesterfield, Luckies, Camels, Philip Morris were all users of radio. Old Golds had been. "Camel Caravan" was a variety revue presided over first by Rupert Hughes, later by Jack Oakie, and distinctive chiefly for having two orchestras on one program—swingy Benny Goodman and nonswingy Nat Shilkret.

ROYAL GELATINE. A big user of broadcasting and in several instances with conspicuous effectiveness, Standard Brands kept the Rudy Vallee "Variety Hour" on the air for eight years. Vallee came in as boisterous tenors went out. He helped croon away the mammy-shouters and many are grateful. By 1937 Vallee was maturing into a smooth performer and compeer. For years Thursday night was dominated by Vallee's program.

SANKA COFFEE. This branch of General Foods retained the service of legit star Helen Hayes, who unfolded weekly samples of dramatic art.

SHELL OIL. "Shell Château" was the locale of a song and music and comedy review moved east from Hollywood.

SINCLAIR. Minstrelsy was dead in the theater but at least in this instance revealed comeback powers over the air. Devoted to simple jokes and songs in the blackface legend of Dockstadter, the "Sinclair Minstrels" have their own peculiar niche. Tickets for studio broadcasts were in big demand among Chicagoans.

As with amateurs, so with minstrels—radio resurrected the forgotten and the obsolete.

STERLING PRODUCTS. "Lavender and Old Lace" and "American Album of Familiar Music" advertised this company's wares. So, also, did Abe Lyman and other shows. They were all mostly music in various combinations although comedy was attempted on occasion.

**STEWART-WARNER.** Horace Heidt was the headman of a versatile orchestra. Musical-production numbers, glee-club singing and novelties converted a half-hour of dance music into a complete entertainment—not unlike Fred Waring.

**STUDEBAKER.** Snappy orchestra show was presided over by Richard Himber.

**SUN OIL.** Lowell Thomas looked into the day's happenings and mildly interpreted them.

**WANDER COMPANY.** "Little Orphan Annie's" perils, her crowded and exciting life was vicariously lived by myriad youngsters. Program stayed completely out of touch with reality.

**WARD BAKING.** "News of Youth" was self-descriptive. It tied in with Scoop Ward clubs and encouraged youngsters to pretend they were newspaper reporters.

**WASEY.** M. Sayle Taylor was a sex lecturer on the periphery of show business when radio came along. As "The Voice of Experience" Taylor pleased a wide following in 1937. His advice on health, heartthrobs and morals was esteemed by many, sneered at by only the snooty few. He stated the difficulty, provided the answer, sold merchandise for his sponsor. He ran a magazine on the side and made moving-picture shorts. His showmanship was indisputable.

"Singing Sam" (Harry Frankel) was a basso who contrived to be very pleasant for 15 minutes on behalf of the same sponsor.

**WELCH'S GRAPE JUICE.** This program said in effect, "Wash away your calories in Welch's Grape Juice. Be like Irene Rich, former luminary of the cinema." Her figure, at forty-two, was held up as what it ought to be. (Another advertiser, Ry-Krisp, employed Marion Talley, also from Hollywood, as program star and visual symbol, at 107 pounds, of similar girth control.)

**WHEATENA.** "Popeye the Sailor," reigning favorite of children, was a newspaper-syndicated comic strip and an animated cartoon of the movies. Program was produced by Walter Craig.

**WOODBURY SOAP.** Paul Whiteman and big guest names were succeeded by Shep Fields and Bob Hope.

What conclusions may be drawn, in the postwar era, from this résumé of network programs in a typical prewar year? Death meanwhile has taken Ben Bernie, Dr. Alan Dafoe, Floyd Gibbons, Boake Carter and "The Voice of Experience." Major Edward Bowes, retired from radio and all other activity for reasons of health, also died. The amateur program as such has tended to evaporate, but its logical successor, the audience-participation shows, in the manner of "Truth or Consequences," give every evidence of going on forever. Programs starring song stylists and personality orchestras still have their place and always will. One is also struck by the fact that change of sponsorship makes little or no difference in the popularity of great entertainers. Cantor, Burns and Allen, Kate Smith, Helen Hayes, Paul Whiteman and Jack Benny have all been sponsored by a variety of business houses.

Comedians, when they really click with the radio public, are able to come back again and again, although Jack Pearl and Ed Wynn certainly waned as national enthusiasms. It is arresting to find Phil Baker and Joe E. Brown converted from comics into quiz masters presiding over audience participations.

It is today no compliment in radio-production and advertising-agency circles to describe a program or an entertainer as "1937 radio." Radio has left behind many of its earlier formulas. The latter-day preference is for ease and informality of presentation. Overelaborate and labored continuities are now deemed "corny." To an exquisite it might appear incongruous to speak of a rising threshold of artistic discrimination in a mass medium dealing to a considerable extent with fads, foibles, foolishments and nursery idiom. Nonetheless, it is a fact that radio programs have educated the public and the public in turn has educated radio programs. It is not that the "what" of broadcasting changes so much but the "how" is certainly changing and, despite horrible examples to the contrary weight, it seems a justified assertion that programs are moving to a higher general level.

A remarkable number of radio entertainments and radio stars have contrived to adapt themselves to the medium—improving in professional skill even while outwardly always the same—and boys now old enough for the army are unable to recall a time when Fred Allen or Rudy Vallee or the Lux Radio Theatre were not on the air. The usual nighttime test of national popularity, "The First Fifteen," provides interesting perspective on the effects of time.

	TOP 15	TOP 15
	<i>Current Rating</i>	<i>Ten Years Ago</i>
"Fibber McGee and Molly" . . .	1	Not Included
Bob Hope . . . . .	2	Not Included
"Lux Radio Theatre" . . . . .	3	9
Bing Crosby . . . . .	4	6
"Screen Guild Players" . . . . .	5	Not Included
Charlie McCarthy . . . . .	6	Not Included
Fred Allen . . . . .	7	4
Red Skelton . . . . .	8	Not Included
Walter Winchell . . . . .	9	Not Included
Jack Benny . . . . .	10	5
Jack Haley-Eve Arden . . . . .	11	Not Included
"Amos 'n' Andy" . . . . .	12	10
Eddie Cantor . . . . .	13	13
"People Are Funny" . . . . .	14	Not Included
Joan Davis-Andy Russell . . . . .	15	Not Included
Major Bowes . . . . .	Deceased	1
Rudy Vallee . . . . .	Not Included	2
Burns and Allen . . . . .	Not Included	3
"Show Boat" . . . . .	Off Air	7
Phil Baker . . . . .	Not Included	8
Boake Carter . . . . .	Deceased	11
"Hollywood Hotel" . . . . .	Off Air	12
Robert Ripley . . . . .	Not Included	14
"First Nighter" . . . . .	Not Included	15

Most radio showmen incline to the view that the public does not favor drastic or abrupt changes of style in their favorite programs. When they tune into "Columbia Workshop," they deliberately seek novelty. They know that no two broadcasts are alike. But they expect and value a certain consistency in the antics of "Ozzie and Harriet." It may seem to the fastidious that Jimmy Durante is too much preoccupied with his own nose, that Eddie Cantor talks overmuch about his five daughters, that Jack Benny's toupee and stinginess are threadbare subjects. Against these aesthetic impressions stands the apparently well-verified disposition of the public to dote upon growth-of-character-based-upon-known-established-traits. The public likes to feel at home when tuning in even after a long absence. In consequence many a radio series is so slavishly devoted to "format" that the casual tuner-inner may suffer a feeling of pronounced familiarity.

It is in music and song and in programs of intellectual content that radio is most likely to be progressive and up to date. Pattern and patter shows, once successfully established, are prone to a superstitious reluctance to amend or alter, and yet in the end they may expire on that account for the public is consistent only to a degree. They like the mixture as before but they refuse to be bored in the name of pleasant memories. Ultimately all formats must change. No joke is infinite.

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## CHAPTER XII

### SHOWMANSHIP AND SPECIAL EVENTS

By 1935 and 1936 radio stations were more and more talking about their showmanship and placing self-admiring advertisements in the radio and advertising trade journals. There was considerable variance in their definitions. L. B. Wilson of WCKY, Cincinnati, said in 1936 that showmanship "is getting the most out of the least with a profit." Norman MacKay of WQAM, Miami, thought "whatever creates a large audience is showmanship" while the late Harrison Hollaway of KFI, Los Angeles, put it as "enterprise in capitalizing on the unusual, drawing listeners through sheer novelty, rather than as a result of academically prepared programs. Showmanship is to a station what personality is to a human being." Earl J. Glade of KSL, Salt Lake City, summed up showmanship as "the originality, resourcefulness, facility and artistry with which station management conceives and executes programs." That station was showmanly in the opinion of John J. Gillin of WOW, Omaha, which succeeded in "keeping general public in territory talking about station in a favorable way."

Nearly all broadcasters seemed agreed that showmanship was a fine thing to have and they were invariably gratified to win one of *Variety*'s annual "Showmanagement" plaques. A station needed to have a policy and a personality. It needed to mark itself off as a particular tree in a forest of call letters. If it succeeded, and to the degree it succeeded, the station exhibited the gift of showmanship.

Showmanship was cultivated by networks and advertising agencies, by comedians and orchestra leaders. Showmanship was style, manner, timing, a way of doing things. It was the difference between music and a musical show, between Jack Benny the man and

Jack Benny the institution. Often showmanship was carefully planned. Sometimes it was impromptu. It was a concern of corporations and program chiefs and it was also a concern of individuals eager to attract attention. Actually showmanship was a loose and unanchored word which meant a hundred different things to a hundred different men. It was bad semantics but a good thing—or so it was generally agreed. Often showmanship would have been more accurately described as motivated extroversion as when a young New York radio director, full of beans and flourish, went to Chicago on special assignment and presented himself before the studio audience complete with tails, opera cloak and silk hat.

But most of the hubbub over showmanship has centered upon radio stations and is due in considerable measure to the inordinate fondness of station managers for accounts of their exploits in the trade press.

Few operations are more conventional, more familiar, more standardized than a station playing phonograph recordings hours on end. Precisely for this reason there is scope for showmanship. When Arthur Godfrey says, "I don't like that record much—I think I'll break it and throw it away," and proceeds to demolish the disc before the microphone, his audience is charmed. Disc jockeys premise their whole popularity appeal upon showmanship—style, pace, humor, unexpected personality angles. So, too, with a newscaster. He may be just a straight voice or a personality. The big money goes to the latter. The showmanly sports announcer re-enacts a baseball or football game, improvising direct from the news ticker as if he were actually present witnessing the sports event. He is transforming a cold, factual account into a dramatic eyewitness running description.

Local station showmanship was perhaps most imaginative and original in terms of special events or stunts. This was true, even though some stunts were merely messy as when, in Boston, an egg was fried upon the sidewalk, one hot July afternoon, to prove that the pavements were indeed hot enough to cook upon. A promi-

inent Boston chef presided at this rather revolting ritual while the station's chief announcer strained to inject showmanship at whatever cost. A motley gathering of idle Bostonians watched the broadcast and perhaps wondered if radiomen, as a species, were not crazy from the heat. In Central Park, New York, on another occasion, there was the solemn nonsense of two lady woodchoppers from Idaho, wrecking a dead tree, by permission of the Honorable Park Commissioner. A retinue of technicians complete with portable transmitters, lines, earphones, panels, mikes and stopwatches was marshaled in the park to describe, to a possibly uninterested world, how the two visiting Amazons were making out.

Radio special-events men took their portable packs into flooded areas, up in airplanes, down in coal mines. They opened the trout season, stalked the first robins, swarmed with the bees. They quarreled about who was first in broadcasting from a submarine. "Sure you were first to broadcast from a submarine," one stuntman challenged, "but your submarine was tied to a dock. We broadcast from a submarine while submerged!"

There was a kind of hysteria in some of the stunt competitions. If one station had a hog-calling contest, its rival responded with a husband-calling exercise. Singing mice, talented parrots, a musical coyote with a much admired high C—any of these oddities was deemed appropriate for the air. If X visited the dairy and milked a cow, Z called upon the zoo and milked a snake. Radio joined the sheriff in hot pursuit of escaped convicts. Radio joined the cotton carnival, the cherry festival, the Wild West rodeo. One station went to court seeking relief from intolerable exclusion from a field in which a cornhusking championship was to be held. Another station, claiming exclusive rights, had roped off the field.

The purpose of the special event was to startle, shock, amaze, amuse, or fascinate the listener, to pile up space in the radio columns and the trade papers, to impress the call letters upon the time buyers, local or national, and to give vent to the bursting energy of the stuntmen. Sometimes a very back-fence attitude was

adopted as when Station WLVA in Lynchburg, Virginia, broke in on a program to say: "Ladies, this is to remind you that it's raining and you'd better go put down your windows." Sometimes the special event was grisly as when KSTP, St. Paul, interviewed a man who was reputed by the local police a "wizard" in locating the missing bodies of drowning victims. KFI in Los Angeles broadcast a series under the arresting question "Why Not Have a Baby?" and then later, in tie-up with the Parent-Teachers Association, clamored for clinics to instruct adults. This bore the title "Parents On Trial."

When a hillbilly band leader married a hillbilly singer in an Oklahoma town, the local radio station hired the civic auditorium and broadcast the ceremonies complete with hog-calling and barbershop harmony, afterwards. A ten-cent admission was charged.

The manager of special events for a radio organization is stuffed with miscellaneous data not usually possessed by the average man. He knows, for example, that January eleventh is the anniversary of the birth in 1759 of Alexander Hamilton, and February seventh recalls to mind the natal day, A.D. 1812, of Charles Dickens. The radio special eventsman knows when it's National Peanut Week, National Tea Week, National Cotton Week. The business calendar in the United States is an elaborate mass of such footnotes. Not only does the "week" thrive but so does the special "day." Thus, there are Egg Week, Baby Week, Restaurant Week, Golf Week, First Aid Week, Foreign Trade Week, Poetry Week, Buddy Poppy Week and Tennis Week. There are also Hospital Day, Outdoor Cleanliness Day, Memorial Day, Groundhog Day, May Day, Mother's Day, and Moving Day. Any of these occasions, or all of them, may force radio to a decision on the grounds of public interest, convenience and necessity.

It is the dream of every radio special-events man to be present, by premeditation or chance, at the exact moment some great news story breaks, but Herb Morrison, an announcer, and Charles Nehlsen, an engineer, of WLS, Chicago, got rather more than they or

any special-events crew ever bargained for on May 6, 1937. This was the day of the fire that consumed the ill-fated German dirigible Von Hindenberg at Lakehurst, New Jersey. Morrison and Nehlsen were in the East, recording novelties of all kinds for their station. They had set up recording equipment at Lakehurst to secure a commentary and sound-effects picture of a transoceanic dirigible in the act of mooring and disembarking. With the sudden outbreak of flames, the abruptness of the catastrophe produced something like paralysis in the two radiomen. Neither could speak. The recording needle jumped off the track but an automatic reflex act of the engineer restored it. The resultant record was highly dramatic, not because the radio announcer was eloquent or articulate or painted a vivid word picture, but precisely because he lost his vocabulary and stammered, stuttered, emitted strange cries of helpless anguish and concern for the trapped passengers. This unscheduled and unpredictable recording has become one of the classics of broadcasting along with the abdication broadcast of King Edward VIII, Roosevelt's "We have nothing to fear but fear" speech, and Hugo Black's address when his appointment to the Supreme Court was under attack. Black had refused to be interviewed by reporters and insisted upon stating his case on the radio only so that, as he said, he could not be edited or interpreted.

It was showmanship when Chase and Sanborn offered a cardboard doll, twenty inches high, in exchange for four empty coffee bags. The doll was a replica of the impudent ventriloquial dummy Master Charlie McCarthy, and thousands of American and Canadian families conceived a great yen to possess the cutout. Children play a big part in showmanship stunts. To them is directed the magical mumbo jumbo of membership cards in imaginary clubs, diplomas, badges, buttons, hats, holsters and whatnot. Youth insists upon joining the Iodent Big Brothers, the Kremel Dessert Gang, the Lone Wolf Tribe, the Trail Blazers, the Scoop Ward Press Clubs and the Junior G-Men.

It was showmanship when Wrigley's Double Mint chewing gum sponsored "Double Everything," a program starring a vaudeville team, Shaw and Lee, who did a double-talk routine in unison. Everything on the show emphasized the "twins" or "double mint" angle.

It was showmanship when the Texas Company popularized its trade-mark "The Fire Chief" by dressing Ed Wynn in a red hat and giving tens of thousands of souvenir replicas away to children all over the land. It was showmanship when Lucky Strikes conducted a prize essay contest on the subject "I Can't Stand Jack Benny, Because . . ."

Once it was showmanship, later it was considered corny to name radio programs not after the star but the product. It was the "Interwoven Pair," the "Eno Crime Club," the "Sinclair Minstrels," the "A & P Gypsies." A one-flight-up clothing merchant once coyly christened his broadcast "The \$22.50 Hour" in honor of the basic price of his merchandise. Radio also had its "funny name" period, as for instance, "Cerebellum and Cerebrum," "Fish-face and Figsbottom," "Grits and Gravy."

It was showmanship when one local radio station broadcast a swimming marathon in a pool filled with milk (in the dairy country) and another station gave an eyewitness report of a wedding in the cherry country with the bridal couple and the officiating clergyman standing up to their chins in a big tank full of cherry juice.

It was showmanship when now defunct WJAY of Cleveland exposed the local underworld, broadcasting the names and addresses of gambling houses from a remote "mystery studio." The underworld couldn't find the studio but they did find the home of the president of the station. A bomb blew out his front porch as a warning one morning.

Weird things were perpetrated in the name of showmanship on occasion. Phillips Lord of "Seth Parker" fame shipped a dubious schooner down the Atlantic seacoast broadcasting his supposed ad-

ventures from a different port every week. Lord himself traveled snugly in a Pullman. A simple-minded trifle called *Jumbo* opened at the old Hippodrome, New York, equipped with the usual vague-to-vanishing musical-comedy plot. A radio program was simultaneously launched "based upon" the nonexistent "plot." Hundreds of thousands of dollars was invested in sheer unintelligibility. About this same time the Russian "comedian" Nikita Balieff went on the air in complete disregard of the fact that he could not speak understandable English.

In a single prewar year, one network booked a glittering galaxy of showmanly guest speakers. There were Ada Cinnamon, the lady night watchman; and Mrs. Ida Gorington, the lady iceman (also a lady shoebblack); and Jean Colwell, the actress who proposed to organize a beautiful blonde brigade to prevent war. There were reports by Suzanne Willa, who designs, makes and sells streamline scarecrows, by Ida Mellen, a fish doctor, and by Miss Alaz Tallo, a professional listener. The life of a dog analyst and shopper was described by Janet Mack, who is one.

A collector of piccolos, Louis Bond, broadcast, as did another gentleman who collects witch globes. There were a few words from R. E. Coulson, a maker of trout-fishing flies. Mrs. R. M. Boardman, director of the Brides' School and Loraine Barstow, founder of Children, Inc., represented social service. Authorities on Tibetan stamps and giraffe figurines spoke. So did Peggy Badey, organizer of the Date Bureau for chorus girls and fifteen-year-old Joseph Becker, founder-president of the Baby-Minding Bureau. Listeners also met William Reilley, the director of the National Institute for Straight Thinking, who read five essays on "How to Use Your Head."

All of this helped roll up radio's grand total of 20,000,000 words each day. Showmanship is the sauce of programming, the application in everyday operational terms of the instinct to exploit the unusual and to serve the public interest, as understood in Washington, without in the process boring the public.

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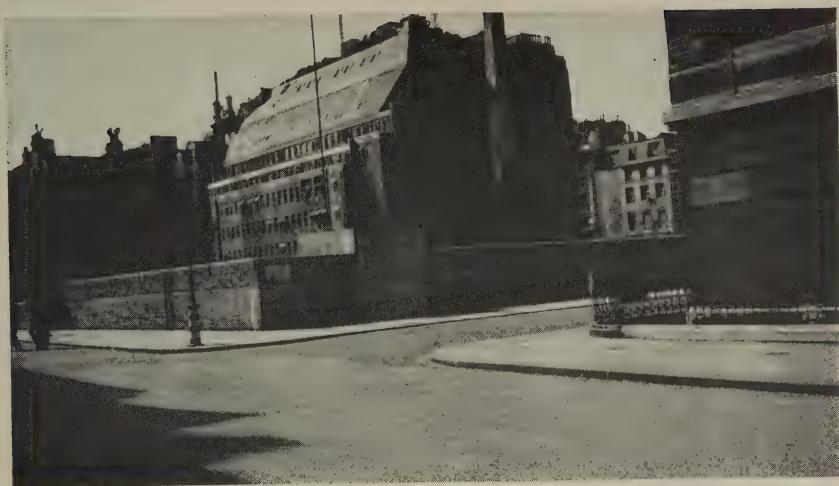
## CHAPTER XIII

### RADIO ROUND THE WORLD

MEANWHILE an announcement out of Moscow implied that New York's Radio City would presently be dwarfed by a stupendous new skyscraper which the Soviet Union would erect for the use of its broadcasters. All around the world there were handsome edifices in the service of radio. Broadcasting House in London was perhaps the most famous. Berlin's Haus des Rundfunks and the Government Radio Palaces in Japan and Switzerland were typical of many others.

In Europe as in the United States radio stations had been created in the first instance by technicians and amateurs. Schools of electrical engineering, scientific bodies, and radio manufacturers pioneered. In general advertising was not the avenue of approach in Europe. Not that it wasn't considered. But the weight of government conservatism, established family wealth, powerful press lords and other influence was against it. Europe lagged behind America in all forms of advertising.

The Canadian radio system is somewhat complicated. It is part government and part private, part English and part French. There are two networks—CBC and Dominion—both controlled by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—the government—which also controls long-line service. This is made available or not to private stations strictly in accord with the convenience of CBC, not the private stations. The situation amounts to this: A government corporation determines the terms and conditions under which the private stations—business rivals for audience and dollars—may operate. It is even more involved, for the CBC feels an obligation to cater to all sorts of parochial groups (i.e. voters) who get dominion-wide broadcasting opportunities all out of proportion



*Photograph by the author*

Rear of BBC London, showing destruction



*Photograph by the author*

Radio Normandy's London office gutted



*Courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation*

Church services in the field



*Courtesy of the American Broadcasting Company*

ABC's George Hicks in the ETO

to their numbers, importance or the public usefulness of their message. Choice evening time is turned over to broadcasts on a par with a church basement rally or in celebration of something strongly resembling a hobby. A shrewd Canadian wryly remarked to this writer not long ago that in his country the sustaining program is supreme and the sponsored program finds time and gets along as an also-ran.

Australia has a dual system, part government, part private, but the "A" (government) stations do not pre-empt for themselves alone the right of hookup. The "B" (commercial) stations are practically as free to compete for business, and to form networks, as in the United States.

The French Government placed some limitations upon privately-operated commercial stations, but a number of these prior to 1939 were free to follow the pattern of advertising sponsorship and some of them like Radio Cité in Paris came to the fore rapidly although the French on the whole were slow to develop broadcasting. But in the latter thirties various French radio executives began visiting the United States to study our methods.

In the Netherlands management of radio stations by associations of listeners was developed as a uniquely Dutch adaptation. There were a "Catholic" station, a "Protestant" station and a "Socialist" station. The geographical tininess of Holland must of course be borne in mind in regard to this arrangement.

Some twenty countries before the war levied a fee upon the owner of a radio receiver. These were sometimes fixed fees, as the ten-shilling (\$2.50) tax in Great Britain (since February 1946, twenty shillings), and sometimes graduated according to the value of the sets and even, in a couple of instances, according to the distance in miles between the transmitter and the receiver. Enjoying as they did a monopoly not only over programs but over the control of news and information about programs, the governmental systems have been able to publish profitable magazines and newspapers dealing with broadcast matters. The sale of talks, texts

of broadcasts, librettos, technical pamphlets and so on also brought various foreign radio systems substantial income. In Great Britain *The Listener* and *London Calling* have literally sold by the millions of copies every issue. Nothing comparable has developed in the United States where it is doubtful that any periodical exclusively concerned with radio has ever regularly exceeded 300,000 circulation.

The case of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) requires some special mention. To the confusion of American visitors, this writer among them, the British long insisted that the BBC was not a government system. The distinction escaped most Americans but technically the statement is, from a British viewpoint, accurate. The BBC is a "public corporation" under a special and renewable ten-year Royal Charter. It is grouped along with telephone and telegraph services under the British Postmaster General. (With the advent of war in 1939 the Postmaster General and the Minister of Information became jointly responsible for the BBC). About \$18,000,000 a year was collected through the British Post Office from set owners but during the war BBC's operations were so immensely expanded that this sum was exceeded by a great deal, BBC broadcasting round the globe (short wave) in thirty-odd languages.

Almost from the beginning there has been in the United States a continuous comparison between the British and American systems. This was actually the assigned debate topic in all American high schools one year. The discussion is absorbing but necessarily inconclusive. There are good points on both sides. Not having advertisers or fixed time periods to concern themselves with, the British are able, for example, to indulge in ninety-minute dramas. The literary trilogy, unknown to America, has a chance over there. It is probably true that the BBC is rather high-brow on the average. It reflects the taste and education of the BBC management in which are men of Oxford and Cambridge who studied Greek and Latin and know something of both. The classical influ-

ence is therefore more likely to manifest itself. Musically and dramatically there is much to commend on the BBC. The BBC newscasts are not necessarily better than American. On the one hand they are less candid but they do avoid some of our American abuses. Our newscasts are, of course, different in intonation and delivery. All in all there are many fine programs on the British schedules and a good deal of program showmanship and intelligence is evident. Their most notable inferiority is in the matter of fast-paced and dynamic comedy.

J. B. Priestley, the British novelist, ascribes the "faults" of BBC squarely to the fact of monopoly. In this he echoes the general complaint that the denial of rival systems and the shutting out of competition make for a less than zestful environment. There is only one runner in the race. Of course, by comparison with the American broadcast companies BBC is perpetually strapped for funds. It has enough money to produce programs but usually not enough money to produce superlative programs. BBC writers and directors are constantly being hired away by the screen and stage. The jokes about the British radio system are like the joke about British cooking: justified in fact but perhaps exaggerated in the telling. Being a government-created monopoly the BBC has, for all practical purposes, a Civil Service status and attitude. It is hard to get a raise or to get fired. Position, prestige and pension are the great values. It happens that there is a good deal of artistic sensitivity and creative skill among the staff and that, despite all, some very fine things get on the air, but the penalties for mediocrity are sometimes rather gentle.

Prior to the Hitler regime German radio was in the hands of ten private and regional societies which were linked into a network through the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft (RRG) and subject to control by the central government in Berlin and the various federated states making up the Reich. There was an elaborate hierarchy of commissions, boards, advisory councils and so on. Goebbels moved swiftly to enforce absolutism upon RRG. All the

advisory societies were abolished since the Nazis wanted no advice. They knew their own minds quite well. The Reichpropaganda-leiter took over.

(It is just one more historical bit of irony that in 1931 the German and Polish radio systems had solemnly concluded a pact that neither would broadcast any material offensive or prejudicial to the other's fatherland. An International Broadcasting Union with its seat at Geneva had been organized in 1925 to enforce order upon the chaos of indiscriminate wavelength jumping, a problem then also engaging the attention of European broadcasters and statesmen.)

Germany, Russia, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Denmark and Norway were among the countries with government-directed broadcasting. Sweden's system was mixed. It had a set tax and no advertising but programs were controlled by various nongovernmental bodies. Spain's big stations were under government control but local advertising existed. Ireland had a set tax and advertising and for a time Station Athlone beamed sales copy toward England, a western offensive to match the sponsored transmissions aimed at English listeners by Radio Normandie and Radio Luxembourg on the continent.

There were 436 broadcasting stations in Europe at the outbreak of war. Europe used the so-called "medium waves" for much of its broadcasting. The proximity of the various countries created problems unfamiliar to America. While some mutual interference has proved irksome as among Canada, the United States and Mexico, this has been simplified by the vast reaches of open country involved. Congested Europe has had a different sort of problem when it came to dividing up a limited number of air lanes on a geographic, population and national pride basis.

Germany reported 15,129,688 radio sets in private hands during 1942. A Russian estimate of 1940 was 10,551,362 receivers throughout the USSR. Great Britain counted 9,139,426 sets, France 5,261,770, Sweden 1,670,188, Italy 1,859,089. Argentina had a

comparatively high installation of 2,086,719 in contrast to Brazil's 898,000 estimate for 1944 and Mexico's 650,000 receivers. There were 1,900,000 home sets in the Canadian provinces according to a 1943 computation. All these figures merely attest the international distribution of radio equipment. They bespeak the universal acceptance of the medium. In the jungle plantation of Brazil the radio operates off the windmill. In polyglot Shanghai there are literally scores of stations and they broadcast in an infinite variety of Chinese and mixed dialects. Australia counts 1,335,336 radio sets. Everywhere radio stations and radio receivers are marks of modernity if not of culture.

The tiny Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, nestling in the rugged country on the borders of France, Belgium and Germany, consistently declined to become a signatory to any of the various international treaties regulating wavelengths. Having only 300,000 population, Luxembourg could not possibly enjoy on an equitable allocation basis a high-powered radio station. That such a station existed, backed by French capitalists, was a matter of concern. Considerable segments of the broadcast day were set aside on Radio Luxembourg for English language programs. A similar situation existed in France itself with Radio Normandie. Luxembourg and Normandie flooded noncommercial, BBC-monopolized Britain with a barrage of advertising. This was especially evident on Sundays because of the BBC's soporific Sabbatarian policy.

Between 3,000,000 and 5,000,000 dollars' worth of radio advertising was sold annually in London in the years immediately preceding the war. The programs were recorded in English on transcriptions and sent by air express to the foreign stations. It all proved handsomely rewarding to the gentlemen who were perspicacious enough to secure the franchises, and presently quite elaborate program studios were installed. Lux, Kolynos, Sterling Products, etc., advertised. Jack Hylton, Jack Buchanan, Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyons were typical of those who provided the entertainment for the London-made transcriptions.

Luxembourg and Normandie "touting" caused a certain amount of well-bred annoyance at Broadcasting House and among the gentry there was a somewhat condescending tendency unfailingly to refer not to Luxembourg or Normandie by name but to "those outlaw stations." The thesis here implied was that radio stations in one land had no moral privilege to rent out their time, or any portion of it, to facilitate an invasion of a neighbor nation by advertising.

Luxembourg and Normandie could not cover all of Britain. Their signals were best in the southern counties. But the audiences they built up were definitely of a size to appeal to the British merchandisers who had not failed in their American travels to take note of the Midas touch of broadcasting.

On various occasions in the years just before Munich there were speculative news stories about the possibility of Britain "going commercial." Many of these stories were certainly planted by interested individuals in London who would have benefited. There is considerable evidence, however, that a large number of enterprising British businessmen would gladly institute American-type sponsorship of radio programs if they were allowed to. That they are not allowed to cannot be attributed to any one cause but if any one cause may be underlined it is the power of the British press lords, many of whom apart from their influence are actually members in Parliament. One speculative news story of 1937 mentioned the promotion of a seagoing radio station. This would have been financed by Britons but the ship would have been under Panamanian or Paraguayan registry. It would have broadcast while perpetually at anchor off the British coast. However fanciful the scheme sounds it was strikingly similar to a threat once made by America's own colorful "Doc" Brinkley who proposed to use the Gulf of Mexico and a radio houseboat in order to beam into the U.S.A. This was before Brinkley acquired accommodations from the Mexicans.

When the Labor Party came to power in Britain during 1945

there was, momentarily, some speculation as to whether the traditional Tory press lords' attitude toward the BBC would be modified. The answer was both obvious and logical. A Socialist government whose major reforms were premised in state controls was not likely to make a conspicuous exception in the case of radio. There would be, to say the least, an apparent contradiction if after nationalizing the Bank of England, the mines, airplane companies and so on the Labor Party turned radio over to the commercialists. While eighty percent of British business remains in private ownership the twenty percent of government business would certainly continue to include broadcasting and the BBC, under Labor as under Conservative control, would sell advertising only in its publications.

"The first condition of good broadcasting," the *London Times* editorialized in April of 1946, "is independence. This indeed is the decisive justification for maintaining the divorce between broadcasting and commercial motives."

Unafraid of commercial motives, the Mexicans have exhibited a great deal of business enterprise in operating their thirty-five stations. The greatest of these is Mexico City's XEW which is owned by Emilio Azcarraga and managed by Othon Velez. XEW is the largest station on the North American continent, operating at 100,000 watts. So great is its audience and so pre-eminent its prestige in Mexican advertising circles that Don Emilio is able to dictate the sort of programs his advertisers may present and these must come up to XEW'S artistic standards. In recent years there has been a definite radio boom in Mexico and most of the type of activity familiar in the United States is duplicated there plus programs and practices which are uniquely Mexican. One of the most "fascinating" radio evenings of the present writer was spent witnessing an amateur broadcast in Mexico City some years ago. It was indistinguishable from a Major Bowes frolic in America except that the victims stammered in Spanish and perspired in Mexican. Naturally the guitar, the marimba and the castanets are prominent

in Mexican radio music. The Mexican literary idiom is somewhat different, too. Yet one is struck by the universality of radio entertainment and the many points of identity. The brand names, or many of them, are the same—Coca Cola, Kolynos, Bayers', Gillette, etc.

What modern airplane transportation has done to obviate long, blister-making muleback trips to remote mining towns the modern communications system—radio, and especially shortwave—has done to bring rugged, remote, mountainous and impenetrable country into regular daily contact with the outside world. Inhabitants of urban centers with every convenience of transportation and communication cannot perhaps be expected to credit the role shortwave radio plays in these circumstances. Shortwave was enormously vital to Norway before the war. It has changed the whole psychology of daily life in Alaska and the Yukon. The powerful transmitter maintained at Prague kept Czechoslovakia in touch with that republic's not-too-dependable friends long after the republic was otherwise hemmed in. In the heart land of Russia there exists a vast network of feeder stations provided with regular broadcast service from Moscow and other centers. The Hungarian maestro, George Sebastian, who went to Russia on a five-year contract before the war testifies that he was driven by dog sled in bitter cold to a concert hall in the Arctic Circle where, divesting himself of his furred garments, he emerged in full evening attire to conduct a radio symphony orchestra for the edification of an audience of apparently charmed Eskimos.

All our information on radio round the world certainly piles up evidence to the one point—no matter what the local philosophy or business system, radio is dear to the masses.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### JUSTICE FOR GENIUS

ILLUSION was made in Chapter Three to the irritation felt by broadcasters at the demands put upon them in the early 1920's by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. These demands increased from year to year and in consequence broadcasters remained continuously irritated with the situation. They felt helpless to protect themselves. On the one hand they could not operate without popular music. On the other hand the control of popular music was overwhelmingly vested with ASCAP and the society revealed a monopoly's traditional tendency to dictate rather than negotiate terms. ASCAP collected a mere \$9,750 in radio music-performance fees during 1923, \$34,725 in 1924, \$130,108 in 1925. Then began the steady climb. True, broadcasting's own revenues were markedly on the increase during this same period but it remained the fixed conviction of a majority of broadcasters that the music society took too large a share of its—ASCAP's—annual income from the single medium of radio. More and more the radio businessmen protested that the society let Hollywood and movie theaters off lightly and made up for it at the expense of broadcasting. In 1937 against \$3,878,751.94 from radio ASCAP settled with motion pictures for a mere \$1,099,512.30. Restaurants paid \$492,119, hotels, \$209,649 and dance halls \$127,806.

The issue simmered year after year and invariably occupied a prominent place on the agenda of the annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters. Delegates not only rapped ASCAP but upbraided one another. There were charges of one group of broadcasters selling out another group in dealing with ASCAP. Bitter wrangling on the floor of the convention engaged

radiomen who had differing opinions on the music-performance fee situation. However, one NAB note was always repeated: "We are weak and divided and ASCAP is strong and united. We shall never win so long as this remains true."

Broadcasters acknowledged—they could hardly deny—the stark economic importance of popular music to their business. It was just not possible to put shows together without the 1,250,000 song titles that belonged to the catalogues of the music houses that belonged to ASCAP. Music was, according to one ASCAP calculation, fifty-six percent of the content of radio broadcasts. Radiomen who grimaced at the implications of such a figure whittled it down to around forty-five percent, but either way it was apparent that popular music was the staple of staples.

ASCAP was a lawyer's creation. It was cannily constructed to enforce its own dictates backed up by Federal law. Federal copyright legislation had been drawn by technicians who had anticipated nearly every future contingency of evasion of payments and had taken care of the matter ahead of time. The garment was a strait jacket when they got through with their stout stitching. With this legal backing, Victor Herbert and his contemporaries organized the society in 1914 to protect themselves from infringement of their copyrights and unlawful (i.e. unlicensed) public performance for profit. The prosecution of the blatant sort of plagiarism and piracy became the lesser function. The collection of fees and the licensing of users of music became the major function.

ASCAP called itself "a voluntary, unincorporated and nonprofit association," but this definition seemed sardonic to broadcasters when the radio assessment doubled from \$130,108 in 1925 to \$276,820 in 1926. In that year ASCAP's total revenues were but \$1,062,619.

There were nine announced purposes of the society, all plausible, but to many a radio businessman these all summed up in the single policy: "Get more from radio." Certainly broadcasters were indifferent or allergic to the strain of sentimentality that ran through

and was exploited by the society. The care of the aged, indigent and sick composers and authors of popular music was not necessarily near and dear to the hearts of station operators who could not always meet their own payrolls. Various officials of ASCAP were accused of bosh and bathos when it came to crying in public over the sad and bleary death of Stephen Foster and other composers whose tunes were greater than their financial rewards. ASCAP was not, the broadcasters averred, the philanthropic institution its after-dinner speakers pictured; but even if that part of the story were genuine it did not follow, from the radio point of view, that radio should provide the means for the practice of such philanthropy.

ASCAP included about 1,100 composers and 100 publishing firms and it was affiliated with foreign performance-fee societies, so that all told some 45,000 composers, authors and publishers the world over had closed ranks in order to enhance the value of their copyrights.

In the United States the procedure for any individual, company or corporation desiring "publicly to perform music for profit" was to apply for and secure a license from ASCAP. This was a blanket license and was neither cheaper nor more expensive because of the amount of music used. Nor was the license unlimited. There were certain specified exceptions. Publishers retained the right temporarily or permanently to restrict certain scores—as of moving pictures, musical comedies, operettas—according to their own convenience. There was also another restraint upon licensees of ASCAP. The blanket sanction was for "small rights" only. This meant that all ordinary purely musical and nondramatic usage of tunes was allowed, but tunes in certain combinations—and especially where a libretto or story was based upon them—could be construed as a "grand right" for which the user was required to secure special and specific permission and to pay a fee direct to the publisher holding copyright quite apart from the annual ASCAP performance fees.

Four times a year ASCAP "cut a melon" on the basis of fifty percent to its composer-author membership and fifty percent to its publisher membership. The society had devised an elaborate point-rating system whereby its members were graded by committees according to artistic prestige, commercial standing, seniority and current and long-continued productivity. As published in the trade journals news of the quarterly ASCAP split-ups fed the flames of radio resentment, for it was felt that this was radio blood upon which tin-pan alley was gorging. The broadcasters pointed to the fiscal facts:

Year	Estimated Gross Broadcasting Industry	ASCAP Income from Radio	ASCAP Total
1927 . . . . .	\$ 4,820,000	\$ 450,750	\$1,359,766
1928 . . . . .	14,100,000	508,984	1,580,694
1929 . . . . .	26,800,000	666,983	1,803,164
1930 . . . . .	40,500,000	867,501	2,043,791
1931 . . . . .	56,000,000	833,496	2,004,496
1932 . . . . .	61,900,000	865,425	2,013,787
1933 . . . . .	57,000,000	1,482,000	3,000,000
1934 . . . . .	72,887,000	2,081,000	3,550,000
1935 . . . . .	87,524,000	2,680,406	4,000,000
1936 . . . . .	107,551,000	3,280,000	4,450,000
1937 . . . . .	144,142,000	3,878,752	5,926,942
1938 . . . . .	150,118,000	3,854,206	6,087,351
1939 . . . . .	171,114,000	4,300,000	6,950,000

The defenders of ASCAP rebutted the charge that radio was being overtaxed beyond its capacity to pay or the reasonable worth of the music. Their thesis was that broadcasting had killed the music business and should, in effect, pay reparations. Certainly it was a fact that the whole *modus operandi* of song plugging had changed radically with the advent of broadcasting. It now required, so ran the tin-pan alley argument, six hits to sell as many copies of

sheet music as one good hit in preradio days had sold. Radio popularized tunes too fast, made people hate this week what they had loved last week. Moreover because of radio music publishers had too many of their eggs in one basket. None of this made much sense to broadcasters. They thought it was "double talk." They declared it didn't make sense to berate radio when it was the sole aim in life of hundreds of song pluggers to get their "number one tune" on as many programs as possible. These same music men who said radio was ruining their business were so eager to be ruined that the networks had to adopt regulations to restrain song plugging in the interest of balanced programs. Otherwise the highly aggressive pluggers would arrange that their tunes be heard every ten minutes, which by their own argument was bad for the music business. Still another circumstance that prejudiced broadcasters against the music men was the widespread if semisurreptitious practice of the "payola." The "payola" is a Broadway euphemism for a consideration or bribe passed by a song plugger to an orchestra leader as an inducement to feature a certain song. It is not necessarily made in cash.

One thing was clear—ASCAP was extraordinarily well organized throughout the country and had attorneys ready to sue, instantly, the most obscure radio station, dance hall or theater. As matters stood ASCAP had merely to establish legal proof that an infringement had taken place. The judge before whom action was taken found himself under the mandate of a Federal statute to award \$250 for every infringement.

Despite the constant mutterings of the radiomen the society seems to have made practically no effort to win friends among them until too late. Nor was there any sympathetic explanation of "intellectual property" rights. It was significant that many broadcasters classified ASCAP in their minds as a union and a partner of the American Federation of Musicians in harassing them. This of course was quite mistaken. The society was not a combination of workers but of owners and creators, and it had no ties, save pro-

fessional propinquity, with the musicians' union. With ASCAP it was a case of feeling supremely confident that the society's legal position was unassailable and that the broadcasters were merely supporting a chronic protest as a scheme of propaganda designed to keep down ASCAP rates.

All the elements of a classic business feud were present. For eighteen years the sense of dissatisfaction and persecution had rankled. Radio felt itself a champion sucker. Broadcasters who were themselves solicitous to please their own best customers realized they had become ASCAP's best customer. "But look at the way they treat us!" was the stock grievance. The curt language of lawyers, the impenetrable austerity of the system, and noncommittal blandness of the ASCAP staff all seemed offensive to the radio-men. ASCAP never condescended to unbend. Instead there were more after-dinner speeches not to thank but to spank the best customer. Psychologically ASCAP itself did more than a little to stiffen the backs of those broadcasters who had no appetite for a big industry fuss.

The showdown was foreshadowed in 1939 when ASCAP moved to jump its radio revenues from \$4,300,000 a year to almost \$9,000,000. This maneuver was linked to a radical revision of the basic plan of compensation. Previously payments to ASCAP had been assessed locally upon the local user. Stations paid at the rate of  $2\frac{1}{8}$  percent of their annual commercial billings. Now ASCAP proposed a five percent rate to be leveled not against the local stations but against the national networks.

NBC and CBS separately gave notice that when the current five-year agreement with ASCAP ran out on December 31, 1940, there would be no more ASCAP music heard over their networks. They would make other arrangements. Less explicitly Mutual was also critical of ASCAP demands. (ABC was not then an independent management.) The issue was drawn at last after eighteen years. But ASCAP at first seems not to have taken the threat too liter-

ally. The networks had been expected to balk at the new setup, to jockey for concessions and then in the end meekly sign up.

Broadcast Music, Incorporated, was presently organized by the radio industry, the networks and local stations subscribing for stock and ultimately investing \$2,000,000 to put over the new music house upon which the industry was to lean so heavily.

"You'll never be able to do it," music men warned radiomen. "You don't know music."

"We'll learn. We'll make out. If radio could make ASCAP hits, radio can make BMI hits."

"That's what you think. Music is not a business, it's an acquired instinct. The men who know how to pick a tune and build a tune are all with ASCAP. You'll go bankrupt."

"We'll see about that."

It is now fairly clear that the strategists at ASCAP had not bargained on industry-wide solidarity to the extent it was arrayed against them. They had expected splintering. Actually there was a certain amount of defection, for the feud was a nuisance. It compelled hundreds of stations that knew nothing about copyright to hire checkers to clear all music in advance of broadcast to make sure it was not included in ASCAP catalogues. This was monstrously difficult. There were literally hundreds of thousands of titles. Often many of them were identical and it was impossible for an ordinary checker to classify correctly which was or was not ASCAP. The society had been definitely coy about providing specific data through the years. "ASCAP licensees didn't need it and it was nobody else's business." Nervous broadcasters now discovered there were thirty-four songs called "Dark Eyes." Still another pitfall was the copyright arrangement or version of a number that was out of copyright and otherwise in the public domain. To use the privileged arrangement was an infringement. Every trick of copyright practice was on ASCAP's side. Every risk of innocent infringement was taken by the broadcasters. Mean-

time the ASCAP attorneys had minions of their own checking stations day and night. Every infringement meant a mandatory fine of \$250. Station managers came to work in the morning to learn they had acquired a \$4,000 liability the previous evening if ASCAP took them to court. Advertisers were nervous about the situation, loath to become entangled in the fight. The networks and stations had to assure and reassure them and to assume all liability. It was especially difficult for the sponsors and advertising agencies presenting orchestral and vocal broadcasts, for they were denied access to the greatest single pool of popular and standard works. Theoretically the music outside the ASCAP family was extensive but on the whole it was less familiar and less adaptable. As for brand-new Broadcast Music, Incorporated, with its brand-new staff and composers who were not members of the society—a dubious recommendation of any songwriter to start with—the BMI repertory just then was a mixed kennel of the sort of vague-to-mediocre songs which are expressively designated in the music trade as “dogs.” Radio orchestras found themselves repeating a few public-domain songs like “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair” *ad nauseum*. In fact this particular song became at the time something of a national joke. Was this the radio industry’s answer to ASCAP?

Both sides in the dispute took their case to the bar of public opinion but neither side succeeded in arousing much interest. Probably this amounted to a net victory for radio since ASCAP had banked upon public outcry against the “dogs” and public demand for the restoration of their favorites. This expectation proved naïve. Broadcasters were willing to go to much expense and inconvenience, to operate under emergency tensions months on end, in order to prove to themselves and to ASCAP once and for all that they could survive independent of a heretofore main source of raw material. Their advertisers chafed a little at the added difficulties and regretted the boycott of ASCAP music but they did not care enough to side with the society or apply pressure upon the net-

works to seek peace. Nor did the outside world display any conviction that the music impasse seriously affected life. It became a moot question as to the significance of public apathy. The most immediate effect was a weakening of ASCAP's propaganda position and by that much a strengthening of radio's. The inference seemed to be that radio was indeed a fortunate industry in that its consumers hardly noticed a conspicuous and well-publicized change of ingredients and formula in the product. This was not the first time that people had stopped to wonder if broadcasting was not a "heads it wins—tails it also wins" industry. Actually there seems to have been some falling off in the popularity of specific programs and perhaps a falling off of radio listening all down the line but not enough to sway the networks. ASCAP was waiting for such ammunition but the broadcasters—wiser in the intricacies of radio research—blunted the force of the new data. Radio strategy proved much more clever than ASCAP strategy. It was bolder, faster in footwork. In this the Broadway dopesters were proved wrong. They had believed all the spectacular coffee-table talk about the many amusing and provocative stunts the society would organize in order to enlist public sympathy. The tall talk evaporated. ASCAP failed even in its attempt to marshal name talent to put over its music and entertainment in rivalry to the networks. The ASCAP-arranged broadcasts on independent stations came to nothing and were rapidly forgotten after a half-hearted try.

Meantime the music publishers tried to turn back to vaudeville, night clubs and other sources which they had neglected for years. It was a case of rearranging the entire economics of popular sheet music merchandising which for the past ten years at least had pivoted on the radio "plug."

During the year 1936, for example, some 132 ASCAP hits had been played, each one at least 10,000 times over the radio. "Did I Remember?" was credited with 30,442 plugs. Some 24,802 radio renditions of "Stars and Stripes Forever" were checked. "I'm an

"Old Cow Hand" was broadcast 20,288 times. That spectacular, short-lived but merry insanity, "Music Goes Round and Round," had 15,757 radio performances.

Dance orchestra pickups as well as the networks' own commercials and sustainers were now closed to them. Most but not all of the publishing houses stayed with the society in its struggle but the attitude along tin-pan alley was lethargic and doubtful. Meanwhile every issue of *Variety*, *Broadcasting*, *Radio Daily*, *Billboard*, was heavy with copy and editorial comment about various aspects of the fight. The society, which had never spent a dollar in all its years for advertising or good will, now sought in one fell swoop to reverse its policy. It contracted with *Variety* to publish a hundred pages of advertising concerning the society, its objectives, its members, its points of view. This "ASCAP issue" duly caused a sensation. It was an imposing job typographically, full of woodcuts and lively reading matter. A. P. Waxman, formerly publicity and advertising director of Warner Brothers, had been retained by ASCAP to organize the project. However the ASCAP experiment in advertising may be said to have come too late, and it repeated a theme which amounted to crying "justice for genius." This was hardly calculated to appeal either to broadcasters or folk generally. Despite efforts to dissemble there was something of the old Broadway cock-a-doodle-do about the ASCAP message. It was boastful rather than amenable and it contained blasts and insinuations against radio which made even the rank-and-file broadcasters very angry. So hot were tempers at the time that some broadcasters vented their spleen upon *Variety* for accepting ASCAP's \$75,000-in-one-issue contract. *Variety* blandly replied, "We'll be glad to carry a hundred pages from BMI any time."

The broadcasters were not conducting their fight solely through the lockout method. In Nebraska and Florida notably, but in other individual states as well, groups of stations had banded together and got state laws passed, the effect of which was either

to compel ASCAP to qualify by state (and station favoring) tests or to shut off its ability to make performance-fee collections altogether. The objective of the broadcasters was a performance-fee system based not upon an annual license for a blanket sum as decided by ASCAP but upon a pay-as-used or per-piece system. ASCAP had ridiculed this suggestion by declaring the cost of auditing and servicing would skyrocket if every individual playing of a song had to be individually tabulated. ASCAP's own "reform" called for payment at the source—meaning the networks.

Some broadcasters attempted to make propaganda capital of the "professionalism" of ASCAP's ranks and charged that the talented amateur could not gain membership. ASCAP was chary of the qualifications of applicants. The talented amateur became a professional and an eligible only after he had written and got published a considerable number of songs. One line of radio propaganda to the public pictured BMI as kind to beginners and nobodies. "Justice for amateurs" was figuratively the answer to the "justice for genius" plea. Here radio was identified with the masses since there were lots of amateurs and only a few geniuses. The public yawned, listened somewhat less, forgot about old tunes and by dint of the dinning on the air passively accepted new BMI hits—some of them indubitably the very "dogs" which by music dictum would never make the grade, but which under such special circumstances did. The public was willing to let the well-to-do publishers and writers fight it out with the well-to-do broadcasters. They had more immediate matters to worry about. For one thing, there was a war in Europe and it was beginning to look as though we were destined to join the belligerents.

The solar-plexus blow for ASCAP came when the Department of Justice sued, alleging ASCAP was a monopoly in the restraint of trade in music. The government also sued BMI separately but ASCAP suffered the real hurt. Another crusher was the desertion of the old ASCAP house of E. B. Marks Music Company which

quit ASCAP and moved over to BMI on a five-year contract. Meanwhile the Federal Communications Commission refused to commit itself either way.

Various attempts to get together failed. The struggle was disrupting ordinary business operations in radio. Top management personnel was preoccupied with winning the fight. At the networks the ordinarily quiet and unvisited music libraries now enjoyed the rapt attention of vice-presidents. Hundreds of checkers, arrangers and musicologists were on the network payrolls as an incident of the contest. NBC and CBS carried the brunt of the fight. The independent ABC (ex-Blue) network was at this time part of NBC.

Somewhat counterbalancing the switchover of E. B. Marks to BMI was the break in the ranks of radio which impelled the Mutual network in May to negotiate and settle separately with ASCAP. But this really came too late to mean much to the society. The ASCAP lockout continued on NBC and CBS and the society again was a main theme of the annual convention of the NAB. During June CBS offered terms to ASCAP but these the society spurned on the grounds of "insincerity"—another way of saying they didn't satisfy ASCAP.

It was November before ASCAP music was finally restored to the networks. In ten months the actual loss of revenues to the society amounted to \$4,000,000. Gene Buck, John G. Paine and E. C. Mills had conducted the ASCAP fight. Buck would presently be retired on pension. The new rival, Broadcast Music, Incorporated, would continue in existence.

The settlement called for ASCAP to receive  $2\frac{3}{4}$  percent of the networks' receipts on commercial programs. ASCAP won the "payment at the source" it had demanded. In addition some nineteen stations owned by the national networks were to pay  $2\frac{1}{4}$  percent of the net receipts of their local and national spot business. Separately the two leading networks, NBC and CBS, secured agreements from their affiliated stations whereby they could deduct  $2\frac{3}{4}$

percent from the moneys owed stations by the networks as a local station contribution to the cost of ASCAP music. It was also provided that the networks would pay the society a blanket license of \$200 a station a year to cover sustaining and public-service shows.

Very little came of the "per piece" demand of local stations. Of three hundred stations that took out licenses on their own with ASCAP, John G. Paine reported that only five exercised this new privilege.

Niles Trammel, president of NBC, and Edward Klauber, executive vice-president of CBS, joined with Gene Buck in issuing a joint statement when the eighteen-year-old feud was finally resolved: "Radio and ASCAP recognize their need for each other. They also recognize their duty to the American public and the cause of democracy."

*Broadcasting Magazine* editorialized: "ASCAP, after a ten-month rendezvous with extinction, finally has made its peace with radio," but added, "There is no basis for gloating on radio's side. ASCAP readily has admitted that it was 'licked' and has learned that radio makes music, not the reverse." The victory had been achieved "through an industry solidarity which, although since broken, persisted long enough to break the music monopoly which had formerly appeared invincible."

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## CHAPTER XV

### RADIO AND ITS GREAT CONTEMPORARY ART—FILMS

IN THE FIRST two chapters of this account of a fascinating and multi-colored industry allusion was made to radio's two original "villains." These were, respectively, the patent-owning, license-demanding telephone company and the copyright-owning, license-demanding music society. In 1926 the radio men had subdued the first villain behind scenes and now, fifteen years later, the second and more picturesque villain had been bested in a dramatic free-for-all. This habit of thinking of others as menaces blinded broadcasters pretty effectually when it came to the question of what other businesses thought of radio. The fact was that radio was itself regarded as a villain by many another industry. To instance the obvious: newspaper and magazine publishers were definitely disturbed by the advertising threat; phonograph manufacturers, although they subsequently staged a whooping comeback, blamed their troubles in the thirties upon radio; the languishing legitimate, the moribund circus world, in fact nearly all forms of professional entertainment, definitely attributed to radio the woes which had descended upon them. Oh, yes, they conceded that the Wall Street crash had made money tight generally.

Second only to the popular-music publishers in petulance were the Hollywood moguls and their national sales managers as theater-attendance figures fell off between 1934 and 1940. Radio was a convenient explanation and alibi. The free show of the air was sabotaging the paid show of the flicker parlors. So ran the contemporary moving picture industry lament. To this broadcasters figuratively replied: "Fiddledeedee and falderal, it's bad pictures

that make bad business and not radio competition." There was common sense in the radio retort, and yet there was no denying the fact that, given hard times and a weak run of film releases, star-studded broadcasts would certainly aggravate the situation. Against screen offerings averaging medium to mediocre in quality radio programs completed the argument for staying home in droves.

Tart references to the radio "octopus," choking off the golden trickle of the box office, came somewhat quaintly from the Hollywood architects of block booking who had, in their time, swallowed vaudeville whole. Nonetheless some of the film studios denounced radio as intolerably competitive in the field of mass entertainment and they proposed to remain aloof and bring up their stars the same way.

Operators of motion-picture theaters around the country filled the film trade journals with diatribes against the Hollywood press agents "selling out" for radio publicity. There was no question that every exploitation officer in the film colony desired above all to tell the world via radio. It was the easy way, the natural way, the glorious way to stir public interest in a given picture and its cast. But, argued the film exhibitors, Hollywood expediency was suicidal. The studios were fatuously feeding and fattening the worst enemy of the box office that had ever been allowed to develop. A couple of the big studios, courting the good will of the film theater owners, virtuously proclaimed that no picture of theirs, no star of theirs would participate in radio ballyhoo. They would starve the Hollywood-originating broadcasts. Without picture names there was no reason for transcontinentals to air from the coast. Deny them stars and they would fold up and go back east. The only trouble with this theory was that two film studios do not constitute an embargo. Radio programs continued to originate in Hollywood and many film stars—enough—continued to appear. The result was sadistic torture for the press agents of the holdout film companies, who had to sit impatiently by while their rivals

basked in the radio spotlight. The holdouts didn't hold out too long.

Hollywood has, since accepting the inevitable, followed the policy of demanding as many publicity mentions and company credits as radio sponsors and radio networks will tolerate. The fight in this regard is unremitting and unpitying on Hollywood's part. In recent years the two industries have, however, been reconciled in that each recognizes that it can learn, benefit and borrow enormously from the other. The pragmatic producer-distributors are not prone to hold grudges or weep for changed conditions. Radio has been exploited for full effect and the stay-at-home influence has been accepted and allowed for. It simply means a new set of calculations and a new set of adjustments. Gone are the comfortable days when exhibitors could depend upon it that two-sevenths of their weekly intake would be deposited in the till on Saturday and another two-sevenths on Sunday.

Actually of course the film industry is financially more important by far than is the radio business. Hollywood is the manufacturing center which feeds an industry with \$2,000,000,000 in plant investment (studios, theaters, offices, laboratories) and 195,000 employees. Radio's capital investment in plant is near \$300,000,000 and its full-time labor force is not greater than 29,000, with probably another 10,000 free lancers deriving all or part of their livelihood from radio.

The film industry's normal gross annual receipts are in excess of \$675,000,000. This contrasts with radio's all-time high of \$300,000,000, in the war-boom year of 1945. But in one respect radio can match the super-colossalism of Hollywood. That is in the measurement of mass audience. Some 52,000,000 paid admissions per week go to support the moving-picture industry. The total radio audience is potentially as large or larger. Indeed it is evident that the two media of mass entertainment share the same following. The radio audience is the film audience and vice versa. Neither art form is high-brow by nature although Hollywood has

its occasional prestige films—"The Informer," "Midsummer Night's Dream" and so on—and the radio industry has its Toscanini concerts, "Invitation to Learning" and "Columbia Workshop."

Both the film industry and the radio industry cater to people in the mass and therefore must forego a good deal of artistic experimentation in favor of the solid tasks of workaday production. This is not to deny that both businesses often suffer from astigmatism and that their complex on box office and popularity ratings saps them of courage.

Meantime it is arresting to trace retrospectively the many duplications of business experience by the visual device of juxtaposition:

*Radio*

A crude toy in the beginning. The "miracle" itself caused wonder and forbearance.

Static, fading, key clicks were finally ironed out by the radio engineers.

A "patent pool" was a dominant primary influence in the early years.

Public acceptance of the medium was very rapid. Business skyrocketed. Promoters rushed in.

Big business units appeared. Networks provided a central supply source of program.

Networks and stations argued clauses and sharing terms.

*Films*

The nickelodeon and the flicker-show were also "amazing" though crude.

Distortion, broken sprockets, inflammability, blur fixed by motion-picture engineers.

A "patent pool" ruled films, licensed whom it chose.

Public acceptance of the medium was very rapid. Business skyrocketed. Promoters rushed in.

Big business units appeared. Hollywood provided a central supply source.

Distributors and exhibitors argued over clauses and sharing terms.

<i>Radio</i>	<i>Films</i>
Stock market boom.	Stock market boom.
Press agents fed gossip columns; news of the stars became a commodity.	Press agents invented reasons for exhibiting the form divine.
Radio clamored for new ideas and new voices but outsiders claimed they couldn't get by reception desk.	Films clamored for new ideas and new faces but outsiders claimed they couldn't get by reception desk.
Ordinary programs not enough. Sponsors gave away diamond rings.	Ordinary films not enough. Theaters gave away dishes.
Radio raided films for talent.	Hollywood raided radio for talent.
Fugitives from vaudeville pursued the second big chance.	Fugitives from vaudeville moved in on film lots.
Actors complained against agents, auditions, commissions, run-around. Formed unions.	Actors complained against agents, screen tests, commissions, studios. Formed unions.
Radio accused of ruining show business.	Films accused of ruining show business.
Radio rapped by parents and teachers, churches, reformers, politicians. Developed series of codes and regulations.	Theologians, pressure groups, foreign consuls, censors hit screen hard. Will Hays office created.
The government attacked the standard business contracts.	The government attacked the standard business contracts.

One must be struck again and again by the many resemblances between the two great entertainment media. They share many of the same virtues and many of the same shortcomings. They both reflect frivolity and triviality. They both play upon the heart-

strings and tickle the risibilities. They are both educative in a profound sense and they are both understandably exasperating to technicians and imaginative people who see—and see correctly—that they are capable of more, much more, than their current performance. That way certainly lies the goal of the future, even in terms of commercialism.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### BUSINESS CONFRONTS GOVERNMENT

**I**N THE YEARS following the big ASCAP fight the radio industry was confronted twice by major reforms instituted by the Federal Communications Commission. The first of these came in 1941, just before America's entry into World War II, and chiefly concerned the networks, as such, in their contractual and policy relationships with affiliated stations. The second crack-down came in 1946, just after the war's end, and was directed preponderantly at local station policies. Both FCC crises produced a stupendous outpouring of claim and counterclaim and both episodes highlighted the familiar question of censorship. The FCC was moving in that direction, said the industry. The charge was preposterous and misleading, countered the regulators. Dangerous precedents were being established, the broadcasters averred. "We've heard that before," was the retort.

Testifying before the United States Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce in 1941, President William S. Paley of CBS put the broadcasters' attitude very clearly. Broadcasting, he told the Senators, "has never been a recalcitrant or defiant industry." On the basis of its record of operation in the public interest and its readiness to respond to public opinion and official regulation alike it was entitled, he thought, to a clear-cut mandate; it had a right to know what its business rights were as against the Federal Communications Commission. Said Paley, "Any responsible business would always rather obey a law than obey a man." This was an allusion to the then incumbent chairman of the commission, James Lawrence Fly, who was the chief advocate of the proposed regulations.

Declared Paley:

In every other field in American industry before anyone can be finally stigmatized and punished as a monopolist he must be made the subject of a judicial proceeding either by indictment or complaint. Here, the Commission, disregarding this ancient prerogative of due process, has chosen to act as complaining witness, prosecutor, judge, jury and hangman, and we find ourselves at the end of the row, stigmatized as a monopolist and most of the important practices of our business sweepingly abolished by administrative fiat.

The outlines of the struggle between the industry and the commission were fairly clear by 1938, the year in which the commission voted to investigate the networks. The industry saw the commission usurping powers not granted it by Congress. It saw itself threatened with overregulation, with attendant worries and burdens. In the view of most broadcasters the FCC was willfully disobliging in its steadfast refusal to define its own policies. Censorship through intimidation was feared. Insecurity and instability loomed ahead together with mounting expenses as stations were forced to comply with expanding regulations. Said Warren Francis, the Washington correspondent: "Broadcasters may find themselves in the same predicament as the railroads, which can't make a move without going to Washington."

Program censorship was a major concern. This had come up repeatedly, but in later years broadcasters thought they discerned a growing tendency to force bureaucratic views upon stations. To quote again Warren Francis: "Each newcomer to the regulatory body—whether he knew anything about radio or not—had some ideas he wanted to crusade for. Bit by bit the commission began tackling other phases of broadcast operation not originally regulated."

Some broadcasters thought the trouble began when Congress exempted 100-watters from quota limitations. This left the way open

for the FCC to locate transmitters here, there and everywhere. Until this change the commission had stayed within reasonably predictable limits of action. Ultimately it was the ambiguity of the phrase "public interest, convenience and necessity" which enabled the regulators to begin scrutinizing program content, advertising copy, editorial policies and even private morals.

Memoranda from engineers and attorneys often influenced FCC decisions and yet these documents were hidden. The complaint was heard more and more that the FCC was fancy-free as regarded legal customs. It improvised its own rules as it went along, disregarding its own precedents, let the explanation fit the decision after the decision had been prearranged.

On November 14, 1938, hearings had begun before a four-man panel of the commission to investigate the network. On May 19, 1939, these hearings adjourned. Over a year later on June 12, 1940, the four-man panel reported to the commission and then, after another year, their recommendations bore fruit in the FCC's Report on Chain Broadcasting, which proposed a series of new postulates of regulation which caused the management of NBC and CBS to lodge strong objections.

Chairman James L. Fly took the leadership and vigorously pressed for reforms in the contracts between networks and their independent affiliates. These reforms compelled, in effect, a recharting of many standard trade practices which seemed to the business mind like change for change's sake.

The FCC regulations were aimed at making the local station—the licensed unit of American radio—free to select and choose programs among all networks rather than cleaving to one network only. The new regulations specifically stated that any local station must have for its own use alone a certain amount of time in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening and that this local option time was not to be subject to recapture by the network with which the station was associated. Another regulation had the effect of limiting the number of local stations a network might own and

manage, and the FCC's attitude clearly envisioned the disposal by NBC of either the Red or the Blue so that, after divorce, no one organization could control two networks.

These regulations and others cannot be understood without reference to the competitive situation. The Mutual network at this time was just six years old. It had been formed in 1935 out of the so-called "Quality Group" consisting originally of three high-powered independents, WOR, New York, WLW, Cincinnati, and WGN, Chicago. WLW, the only station ever licensed in America to operate experimentally (and temporarily) at 500,000 watts, had been a leading spirit in the idea of selling a select few stations in populous markets. But subsequently WLW became inactive and Mutual leadership fell pretty much to the Macy Station, WOR, and the Chicago *Tribune* station, WGN, who formed partnerships in New England with the Shepard interests, in California with the Don Lee regional and so on. Although there were two hundred and eighty stations associated with Mutual in the end, the network's stock was distributed among fewer than twenty stations. It was therefore not literally true that Mutual was a co-operative network. It was, in a qualified sense, a station-owned and a station-financed network and to that extent, and this was a drastic consideration, it was nonorthodox.

Mutual derived its revenues from commissions paid into the central treasury on business which the Mutual sales staff secured and placed with the associated stations. All the ordinary costs of network operations—usually borne by the network itself—were distributed to the stations. These included line charges for telephone and teletype connections and for sustaining programs. Mutual had for a long time no centrally created programs at all. All Mutual sustainers were produced not by Mutual but by various local stations affiliated with Mutual. Mutual properly speaking had no program department, only a co-ordinator of programs. There were no staff directors or writers or editors at Mutual. Just salesmen, bookkeepers and co-ordinators for programs, publicity and

station relations. The stockholder stations provided an annual operating budget every year.

Jerome Sill has explained part of the economics of Mutual as follows:

Mutual has attracted advertisers to their small town stations not through selling the virtues of these markets but through offering an overall discount, as much as 50%, to advertisers using the entire network. Since the 50% applies to all stations used including the big-city basic network outlets—whose total rate is \$8,315 per hour—it is easy to see that many of these small town markets are really added at no added cost.

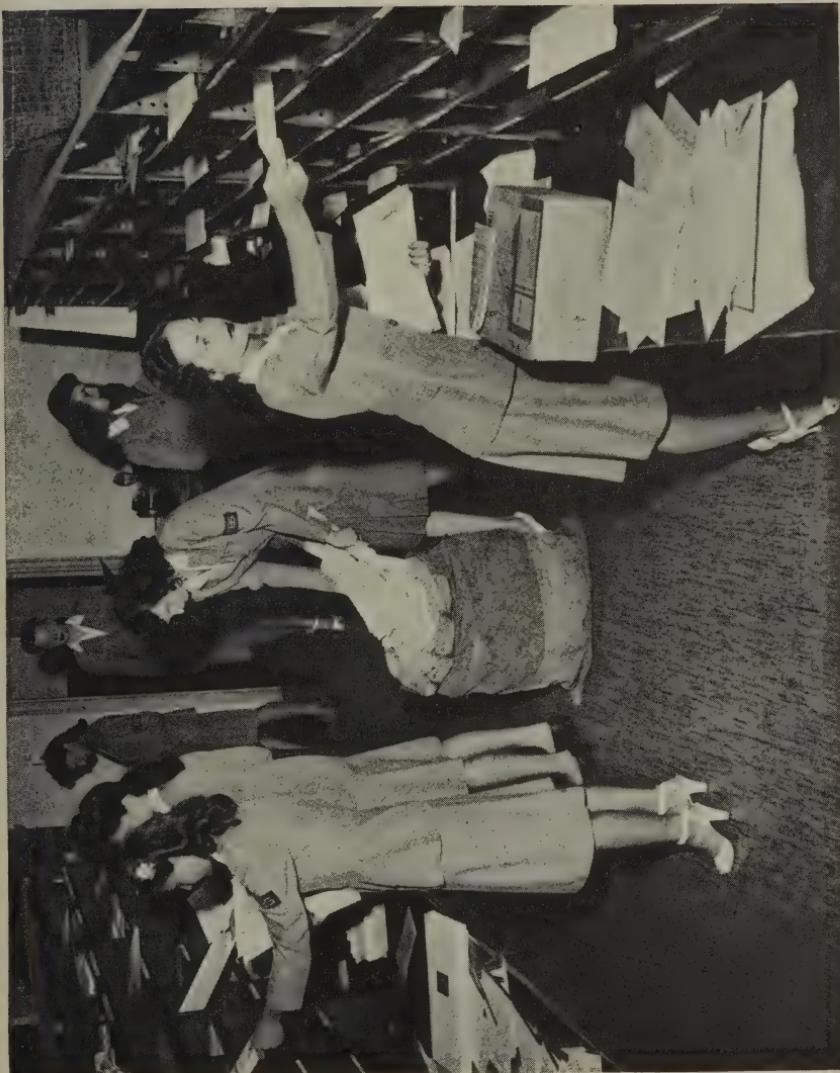
This works out in terms of advertising agency commissions. Sill instances twenty-six supplementary stations of the Mutual Pacific Coast Group offered, with the fifty-percent discount proviso, at \$62.50 for a quarter-hour daytime for all twenty-six stations. Says Sill: "That's an average of \$2.40 per station. But were you to buy these stations independently of Mutual you would pay \$140.80." The question economically, is, as Sill puts it, whether without the Mutual plan these small-town stations would "accept [at] a rate reduction of fifty percent to get national business . . . would they pay anyone to get it for them . . . could the agencies afford to place orders yielding them a gross profit of 36 cents per program?"

All this hints at some of the peculiar difficulties of Mutual management. Mutual comprised many stations of size and prestige. It also included myriads of remote low-powered stations in little towns which often got passed by in network broadcasting. Suffice that Mutual had a hard row to hoe in a highly competitive field and was often bitterly disappointed. Too large a share of its network revenues was represented by religious evangelism and laxatives, accounts totally unacceptable on NBC and CBS.

Mutual endorsed the Federal Communications Commission's proposed chain regulations, for it saw new economic factors that

*Courtesy of the Columbia Broadcasting System*

Radio gets lots of mail





Front row for sports

would be favorable to its own expansion. Mutual's White Paper of May 1941 addressed to its stockholders and affiliates spoke of the FCC report in these words: "Contrary to the impression given by its critics, you will find it scholarly and temperate in tone, evidencing careful and extensive research." Mutual went on to assure its readers that the new chain regulations did not "abolish network broadcasting any more than the dissolution of Standard Oil abolished the petroleum industry."

But the Mutual White Paper hastened to add: "It is childish to charge Mutual with responsibility for either initiation of the proceedings or the results." The Mutual network had resigned its membership in the National Association of Broadcasters about this time because the NAB had "identified itself with the views of NBC and CBS." Mutual's final note predicted: "The Commission's action will tend to promote and not to injure success and progress in a truly American system of broadcasting."

The National Association of Broadcasters was kept in continuous turmoil throughout this period by ASCAP and FCC matters and with Mutual usually at loggerheads with the rest of the industry. The annual convention at St. Louis in 1941 had been marked by a curious, almost weird, incident involving the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission himself. Fly was seated on the dais at the opening session. One of the speakers launched into a sarcastic tirade against his policies and inferentially against Fly himself. The chairman sat imperturbably throughout, jotting down notes and apparently expecting that he would be invited to make rebuttal. Neville Miller, paid president of NAB, was presiding and Fly looked to him for introduction. Instead Miller seemed not to know Fly expected to reply then and there. The situation was immediately obscured by charge and countercharge. Enough that Miller did not call upon the chairman of the FCC. He stated later he expected Fly to have an opportunity to speak at the afternoon session. But Fly saw himself first berated at a convention to which he had come as an

invited guest and then denied a chance to reply, for Miller had brought down the gavel and adjourned the meeting for luncheon, leaving Fly with a handful of notes. Fly in hot anger stormed out of the St. Louis convention and being immediately accosted by newspapermen he compared the NAB to "mackerel in the moonlight—shining and stinking." This classic observation was duly transmitted over the wires to the nation and emblazoned in many a newspaper headline. Neville Miller tried to apologize, insisted it was all a mistake, didn't see why Fly was so vexed. But the visit of the FCC chairman to the NAB convention was, no matter how interpreted, a colossal fiasco from which the chairman had taken away angry and resentful impressions.

Resentment is a two-way emotion, however. The networks resented Fly's castigations. Fly dwelled only on alleged abuses via contract. He did not concede much to the networks in accomplishment or good will. President Paley of CBS commented on this before the Senate committee. "Mr. Fly cannot laugh off what we have done," he declared, "and should not be allowed to laugh it off, by dubbing us 'New York corporations' as often as he could possibly force that phrase into the record."

Paley informed the Senate committee that as a result of the regulations prepared by Fly:

We find ourselves after all these weeks still at a loss as to how to operate a network successfully under the new rules, either from our own selfish economic point of view or from the standpoint of public interest and good programming.

Fly had belittled the objection raised by broadcasters to his proposed regulations. He had declared that businessmen always fought regulation, always denied the evil of their practices or the demonstrable need for their reform. He hammered at concentration of power and abuse of power. Now Paley retorted: "I am one of the two persons who has been publicly accused by the

Chairman of the Commission of controlling 86% of the night-time power of broadcasting in the United States. These charges are senseless and baseless. They reflect a state of mind that is anything but impartial and judicial."

The blistering reply to Fly continued,

The real heart of this charge of domination is the implication that the networks either can or do somehow manipulate public opinion to serve their own ends or the ends of favored persons or causes. This whole charge is false. It was built up by the Commission's Chairman by ignoring publicly-proclaimed and long-established practices. I am going to refute it here and now. Long years before the FCC even recognized this problem, the broadcasters themselves recognized it and dealt with it. We dealt with it voluntarily and at great cost to ourselves.

And later . . . the record presented to the Commission showed a loss of \$9,000,000 in revenue from business we rejected because it conflicted with our standards and policies.

Paley went on to wonder if the FCC understood the fundamentals of how "broadcasting works and how advertising works." He saw the proposed regulations as hampering in the extreme. "The national advertiser, under the network system, has been able to be assured of time for his program and a nationwide audience justifying his expenditures." The national advertisers' efforts

must be carefully and almost scientifically planned. Very often they are tied in with his whole manufacturing and merchandising operation as long as a year in advance. His selling efforts must continue over a period of years to be effective and he does not feel justified in counting upon our network as one of his principal selling aids unless he knows that he can get time and coverage and that, so long as he pleases his audience and his program pays, he can maintain it.

Under the proposed FCC regulation striking at option time, exclusive affiliation and guaranteed contractual relationships, CBS

foresaw a curtailment of advertising and ultimately of broadcasting service to the nation.

The debate over the Fly proposal continued for months and engaged the brains and dialectical skills of some of the sharpest personages in and out of government. In the end Fly initiated amended regulations designed to be less onerous. The previous flat prohibition against option time was liberalized. Network-station contracts which had been limited to one year were now allowed to run two years. The divorce of the Blue Network from NBC stood, but the effective date was indefinitely postponed to avoid a hasty knockdown auction sale. But the objectionable features from the standpoint of NBC and CBS remained unchanged and the two big networks sought injunctive relief. They filed on October 30, 1941, asking the New York District Federal Court to restrain the FCC from putting the regulations into effect. On February 21, 1942, the New York Court dismissed the suits on ground of lack of jurisdiction and the case went to the United States Supreme Court. The latter remanded the case back to the New York Court for trial on the merits.

NBC's suit was in association with the Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society, owner of WOW, Omaha, and Stromberg-Carlson Telephone Manufacturing Company, owners of WHAM, Rochester, New York. It recited the practical effects of the FCC order in this language:

First, it seeks to compel a drastic revision of business arrangements between network organizations and approximately 500 independent standard broadcast stations, which make possible the nationwide broadcasting service existing in the United States today. It disrupts the present nationwide network services and deprives each of these stations of a most valued asset, its present network affiliation contract.

Second, it seeks to prevent a network organization from operating the only, or the best, station in certain localities and to prevent a network organization from operating more than one station in any locality.

Third, it seeks to limit a network organization to the operation of one network.

The order seeks to effect these things through the establishment of eight predigested conclusions which are determinative of the public interest in all future proceedings for the issuance or renewal of standard broadcast station licenses.

The NBC brief continued:

The importance of the issue before the Court cannot be put too forcefully. . . . All the hard won concepts of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and freedom of thought are immediately recognized as being fully applicable to radio. The fact that Hitler imposed his will upon the German people largely by plenary control of radio amply bears out the recognition. The whole future of this expanding method of mass communication is here at stake. . . . This ill-defined and amorphous power is sought to be grafted upon the licensing power, which is the power of life and death.

Commissioners T. A. M. Craven and Norman Case had dissented from their five colleagues in the FCC and the NBC brief quoted their minority comment:

Congress empowered the Communications Commission to regulate only that phase of radio operation which relates to licensing stations. This embraces a fair and equitable distribution of radio facilities to states, communities and persons in the manner which insures diversification of control among many licensees as well as a good program service of interest to and in the interest of the public. It likewise includes the regulation of the technical aspects of operating stations and certain other phases of radio operation affecting public interest. . . .

But opined Commissioners Craven and Case:

The commission is without jurisdiction to promulgate regulations which undertake to control indirectly the business arrangements of broadcasting licensees.

The Supreme Court itself in a previous ruling involving an important test case had declared:

Plainly it is not the purpose of the Act (of 1934) to protect a licensee against competition but to protect the public. Congress intended to leave competition in the business of broadcasting where it found it, to permit a licensee who was not interfering electrically with other broadcasters to survive or succumb according to his ability to make his programs attractive to the public.

The New York District Court finally ruled against both NBC and CBS and the issue then went on appeal to the United States Supreme Court. Again the FCC won and the networks lost. Injunctive relief as a legal expedient had failed absolutely for the webs. But all this agitation and litigation served to clarify many things in American radio. The networks had contended so fiercely because they foresaw chaos. It was felt that if a given station did not need to remain loyal to its network, if it did not need to make its time available to national advertisers, then the whole known and demonstrably successful way of doing business would be scuttled. The networks logic was apparently sound enough. In theory the regulations opened up, in the name of freer competition, all sorts of complications. But in application, once Fly's regulations as amended went into force, the dire consequences did not materialize and for a curious reason that apparently neither side to the dispute had anticipated. National advertisers and local stations found that their own self-interest was substantially identical with the network argument. While the national advertiser and his advertising agency now had a legal right to pit station against station and conversely the local station had the legal right to pit program against program and advertiser against advertiser the exercise of these new privileges was not something lightly undertaken. Indiscriminate jockeying for deals was a losing and costly game for too many people. It put a premium upon

mere cleverness rather than upon well-defined values. The invidious comparison as a daily business foot rule opened up unpleasant prospects of counteraggressions. If, let us say, Station B in Kansas City is passed up as a regular affiliate of Network B this slap in the face, business-wise, will not be forgotten by Station B should the same advertising agency come along at another time seeking a business favor. It worked the same way in reverse. If Station B canceled or refused to accept a regular program of Network B and selected instead Program D from Network D then this was, in its way, a slap in the face for the advertising agency producing the show which was spurned. The whole vista of confusion and cutthroating which the new rules opened up resulted in a disinclination to evoke them in these business relationships. Nonetheless Fly had his way in a number of notable respects and the broadcasting industry of the future is definitely going to be influenced by some of his general theorems. Most significant result of the Fly campaign is the existence of a fourth competitive network, ABC.

In response to the FCC's ruling NBC set off the Blue Network by itself in January of 1942. This was a month after Pearl Harbor, which means that the Blue set up shop at a time when technical equipment, office space, personnel and everything else were hard to come by. Separate management and staffing, looking ahead to the day when a buyer would be found, were increasingly real even though many of the Blue officials recently had been NBC employees. During 1942 the addition of twenty-four new national advertisers enabled the Blue to boast in the trade that this represented more clients than any other network gained that year.

Early in the summer of 1943 Edward J. Noble, manufacturer of Life Savers (candy mints), purchased for \$8,000,000 all the outstanding capital stock of the Blue Network. The sale was approved by the FCC on October 12 and two days later Noble took control. Three months later, again with FCC approval, twelve and one-half percent of the stock was sold to Time, Inc. and twelve

and one-half percent to Chester J. LaRoche, recently president of the Young & Rubicam advertising agency. Noble bought back the twenty-five percent of Time, Inc., and LaRoche, in the autumn of 1945 at which time LaRoche resigned his position as vice-chairman of the ABC board. The designation "Blue Network" had been dropped during the summer of that year.

As revised the ABC board included, under Edward J. Noble's chairmanship, Earle E. Anderson, Justin W. Dart, Robert H. Hinckley, Harold V. Hough, Robert E. Kintner, C. Nicholas Priaulx, Franklin S. Wood and Mark Woods, the last mentioned being president of the network.

ABC reported gross time sales of \$40,045,966 for 1945 and in the spring of 1946 offered affiliated stations and public investors a block of stock valued at \$15,000,000, the proceeds to finance expansion and improvements, including an item of \$3,650,000 for purchase of the Michigan Radio Network from King-Trendle.

Meanwhile in the fall of 1944 the Blue Network's executive vice-president, Edgar Kobak, moved over to the Mutual network as president. Two other Blue Network officials joined him at Mutual, Phillip Carlin as program vice-president and Robert Swezey as vice-president and general manager. The significance of this executive alignment consisted in the policies the Kobak-Carlin-Swezey regime was authorized to initiate. Mutual had been a station-operated network. It still was a member-controlled business. But now the move was in the direction of centralized program creation and other network policies comparable procedure-wise to NBC, CBS and ABC. Although a WOR official, Alfred J. McCosker, was chairman of the Mutual board the network as a network consciously planned to strengthen its own independent position. Mutual's increase in advertising volume at this period was so great that fifty-five new stations affiliated with the network and in April of 1946 the Mutual network had three hundred member stations.

The broadcasting industry was changing rapidly on the net-

work level from 1941 onward. This began with the FCC regulations with which this chapter has dealt. The divorce of the Blue Network and its sale to Edward J. Noble introduced new competitive factors. So did the new policies and personnel at Mutual. In the everyday realities of salesmanship it was usually NBC versus CBS and ABC versus Mutual but this should be read as a tendency rather than a truism. It was wartime prosperity that reduced the number of local U. S. radio stations operating in the red from 188 in 1942 to a bare 33 deficit-reporting stations in 1944.

In a matter of months after V-J Day the radio industry was again up against a new set of FCC regulations. The 1946 companion piece to the 1941 report was credited to Charles A. Seipmann, formerly an official of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Now as a citizen of the United States and a philosopher-by-appointment to the FCC he became the *enfant terrible* of American radio, attacked and attacking.

As the broadcasters saw Seipmann he was the author of two documents, one official, one personal. The official document, the FCC Blue Book, and the personal document, Seipmann's own book, *Radio's Second Chance*, both dealt with identical data and expressed essentially one point of view. But whereas the FCC report was in qualified prose the Seipmann book was far more extreme. A question therefore arose in the minds of the broadcasters. Was the report or the book the true picture of FCC intentions? Basically the issue was the same one that had divided the government and industry for years. Broadcasters saw an invasion of private operations, an imposition of censorship or the beginnings of censorship. The FCC's friends, men like Seipmann, Morris Ernst, and Morris Novik, argued that the 1946 regulations were reasonable and, in their view, clearly needed.

The industry's views were not uniform by any means. Part of the resentment derived from a failure of the FCC to allow radio a chance to meet any criticism by its own action. It was also felt that the FCC fell into clichés of thinking about radio, that

the commissioners acted as if "public interest" and "noncommercial" were synonymous terms. For example, under the FCC interpretation, time signals given by a station itself could be audited as public service but time signals sponsored by Gruen or Bulova watches had to be logged under the "commercial" designation. Or again the Metropolitan Opera or the Philharmonic Orchestra were "in the public interest" inferentially only when offered sustaining. Under sponsorship the industry could take no credit. Many broadcasters were especially piqued that the FCC so consistently sided with college professors and high-brows in assuming that radio operators were wholly devoted to dollar-chasing and nothing else, that no broadcaster had ever stood up to an advertiser or refused him anything, that little or no imagination was ever manifest in the planning of program schedules. The FCC quoted in its 1946 report the imbalance and neglect of five home-town stations. There was no offsetting data about FCC-admired stations, nor indeed any acknowledgment that there was such a phenomenon anywhere.

Has the radio industry adopted an overpious attitude toward FCC proposals? That is the charge of those who argue that the kind and quality of program service is a relevant factor for the FCC to consider in granting licenses and renewal of licenses—especially where two or more applicants for the same wavelength are involved.

The FCC's four criteria for the judgment of overall program service emphasized: (a) the carrying of sustaining programs as part of a well-balanced program structure; (b) the carrying of local live programs; (c) the carrying of programs devoted to the discussion of public issues, and (d) the elimination of advertising excesses. These certainly read mildly and many men of good will would be disinclined to challenge such an innocent-seeming prescription. But the broadcasters remained suspicious. This was not government by law but by a small group of men. It did not allow the industry to do its own policing or public opinion to operate as the

decisive factor. When defenders of the FCC report argued that the FCC itself represented public opinion broadcasters refused to endorse such an interpretation. The FCC was an appointive body to start with, it had a utilities regulatory complex, it was swayed, they suspected, not by public opinion but by highly articulate individuals whose views of modern society were unsympathetic rather than constructive. Certainly an element in the broadcasters' psychology of 1946 had reference to the fine job they felt the industry had done during the war. They saw their war record brushed aside and their war profits alone quoted.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### BROADCASTING'S FIRST WAR

**I**N CHAPTER TWELVE dealing with showmanship it was suggested that radio special-events men had a predilection for riding with the ambulance crews to all fires, floods and catastrophes. They delighted to be first upon the scene and to thrust into the startled or dazed faces of survivors the portable microphone of inquiry, saying, "And then what happened? Tell us in your own simple words."

Nought so sweet to the special-events man as to stand upon X, the spot, and interview A, the victim, or second best B, the eyewitness. It was but natural that they should quite early turn, as by instinct, to Europe, the native habitat of the victim and the fatherland of the eyewitness. Europe exercised upon the American imagination a macabre fascination. Europe was so cultured, so different and so certainly fated for grief. The radio invasion opened with quiet menace in 1930 when William Hard representing NBC and Frederick William Wile representing CBS went to London on special assignment. The event: Naval Disarmament.

Very soon both webs had regular salaried London representatives. The NBC appointment went to Fred Bate, artist, RCA alumnus, cosmopolitan and friend of the Prince of Wales. Cesar Saerchinger, writer and historian, served for Columbia.

In the beginning they collected "celebrities." America heard His Holiness the Pope, Eamon De Valera, Thomas Masaryk, Viscount Cecil, Rudyard Kipling, Gilbert K. Chesterton, Hugh Walpole, Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin, H. G. Wells. Saerchinger lined up George Bernard Shaw for CBS and that worthy began his characteristically impertinent talk by greeting his American audience as "You dear old boobs!"

There were, too, many a folksy broadcast in those days. Hardly a week went by—or so it seemed—without one of the American networks importuning some London cabbie to state his views on world affairs. These were commonly supposed to be extremely significant. Saturday night in an English pub also was thought to ring the bell in a big way when transmitted across the Pond. Dancing in the streets of Paris on Bastille Day was obviously a natural and royalty was usually worth a quarter of an hour. There was one memorable occasion when the Queen of the Netherlands was scheduled to christen a new Dutch destroyer. A hustling New York program official cabled the Hague, "If Her Majesty will delay christening two hours we will carry ceremonies. Cable confirmation."

The reasoning was simple. If baseball, football, basketball games, prize fights and horse races could be rescheduled to fit in with broadcasting plans, then why should not the Dutch Navy be equally obliging?

London was the big pickup point for American broadcasts but the continent was not neglected. Indeed CBS protested again and again that NBC was unfairly excluding it from Germany with which land NBC, via RCA, had an "in" dating back to the Owen D. Young negotiations of 1920. From 1929 to 1936 NBC received 259 programs from Germany and sent over 226.

Berlin of course came to be the natural news center of Europe but at the same time the hardest place of all to get news. The men who were plotting war did not confide their plans or answer questions. Still it was practically a necessity to have coverage there and Columbia finally got accredited. Meantime special events took a sharp dip into grim realism when the actual sound of artillery in the Spanish Civil War was put on the air for America to hear. This was a ghastly foretaste of later broadcasts of gun blast and doodlebugs and ambulance sirens in London and Plymouth and Coventry. Special-events men of the British Broadcasting Corporation would huddle one day by the White Cliffs of

Dover, carefully recording the whine of German shells lobbing across the channel.

The Spanish Civil War also introduced the phenomenon of "broadcasting generals." Miaja for the government, Queipo de Llama for the Franco Falange used the air for psychological offensive. Years later when the big war had developed and France lay prostrate another broadcasting general, Charles DeGaulle, would din from London the cry that a battle, not a war, had been lost.

It was the Russians who pioneered high-powered international voice transmissions. In the early thirties from antennas in Europe and Asia, they were broadcasting in fifty languages. This writer stayed up all one night in Los Angeles during the spring of 1931, fishing for Siberia. Finally just before the California milkman's arrival the signal came through across 12,000 miles of nothingness. It was unmistakable. Siberia was playing a phonograph recording of "Three O'Clock in the Morning."

German equipment presently was of the finest, about the best in Europe, laying down loud and clear signals. The German radio industry also began negotiating contracts to build radio transmitters for foreign governments. Argentina signed up. So did Thailand, Greece, Bulgaria, Belgian Congo.

Once the Germans began taking advantage of the Allies' disunity and weakness the world realized the value fascists placed upon immediate seizure of radio facilities. In strategic importance radio now rated with the arsenals, the railroads, the banks, the electric system and the press. Clearly this boundary-jumping, ocean-hopping, time-annihilating medium of communication would be a star performer in global warfare. Britain had perfected the Empire hookups as a twentieth-century refinement to the art of statesmanship. France, backward in radio, was hurriedly improvising its Paris-Mondial shortwave operations with a worried interest in her own world-wide possessions. Meanwhile from Daventry, Paris, Moscow, Berlin, Prague, Rome, New York, San Francisco, Schenectady and other places broadcasts regularly dribbled round the

globe in such unexpected languages as Arabic, Magyar, Hindustani, Czech, Korean, African as well as the more conventional English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese.

As soon as the Germans marched into Poland and war began in earnest, Broadcasting House in London sprouted a trellis of sandbags and a program official suggested with typical British understatement that "things may be a bit unpleasant for a while." The BBC staff went underground, scattered in small program teams of announcers, engineers, musicians and actors. One of the new secret broadcasting centers—actually Bristol—was whimsically called "Hogs Norton" and there was a certain amount of typically underplayed British humor, reference to the "Hogs Norton Hunt Club" and so on. It all must have been most perplexing to the serious-minded Germans. The expected Goering bombers did not come right off but a year after Poland hell broke loose in Britain. A direct hit on Broadcasting House crushed out the lives of a dozen radio workers on the top floor. Fred Bate, the NBC representative, was badly injured in a bomb blast that blew NBC literally out of Electra House on the Thames Embankment. CBS's Edward R. Murrow had his office caved in. Fortunately nobody was hurt but bomb blast forced CBS successively to abandon three wartime headquarters. Finally Murrow functioned in a private flat on Hallam Street with his news tickers stuck away in what had once been a scullery.

In August 1939 NBC Red and NBC Blue, then two networks under one management, employed forty-six reporters scattered around the world. Columbia had twenty-four and Mutual six. John Steele, a former Chicago *Tribune* Bureau man retired in England, acted as Mutual's London agent.

These men had become skillful walkers of tight ropes. A year before the war Edward R. Murrow, European chief of CBS, had summed up policy when he said in a broadcast from London, "We are trying to provide material on which an opinion may be founded, but we are not trying to suggest what that opinion should be."

Obviously it was much more difficult after hostilities broke out. William L. Shirer has made vivid in his *Berlin Diary* the nightmare of radio reporting in censorship-rigid Gestapo-patrolled Germany. His task was somehow to approximate honest journalism while avoiding arrest or expulsion.

The radio reporters did have some advantages. They selected the order and emphasis of their own news, they wrote their own headlines. What they said, however, hedged by censorship, was heard by millions of listeners who would otherwise have got very little foreign news. They were able to communicate a certain amount of comment not in words, which the censor controlled, but in intonation and style of delivery which they played deadpan under the very noses of the censors.

Radio reporters shared with newspaper and syndicate reporters a common helplessness as the blackout on information developed in August of 1939. As their home offices screamed for headlines to feed the news-hungry American populace it was embarrassingly obvious that there were no facts worthy of the name. Was there going to be a war, or wasn't there? Was this just another unconscionable German blackmail campaign or would bullets fly? Only a handful of insiders knew and they weren't telling. Suddenly in the midst of all this maddening reticence and at the very height of the nerve offensive a local radio station in New York City, WMCA, popped out with two sensational international "exclusives" from Europe, both throwing light on the great question and both scoops creating consternation among professional news gatherers. On different days five metropolitan New York dailies had to credit their most provocative front-page story to a local radio station. It was humiliating and it was puzzling.

Then the New York *World-Telegram* cracked the mystery. It seems that a few weeks before, Station WMCA had hired an expert in naval code and had stationed him beside a high-powered radio receiving panel. There he picked up the British Admiralty

flash ordering all merchantmen to make for the nearest safe port and later he heard Berlin, in the midst of a routine-sounding news transmission give the three code words "*Nach sonderonweisung hendeln*," which WMCA's expert translated—and correctly—to mean "Upon receiving this message carry out your secret instructions in the event of war."

The Federal Communications Commission at once emitted a bellow of outrage and summoned the officials of WMCA to a special hearing. Did they not know that the first law of ethereal communication made a message addressed to a recipient "privileged" and never to be copied, repeated or published? WMCA said no, they didn't know, this was their first war.

The publicity given this case focused public attention as never before upon the upper regions of the atmosphere, that mysterious twilight zone devoted to marine, aviation and police communication. The high frequencies, it was decided, must be alive with diplomatic scoops. There was a rush of men and women to the offices of the networks, stations and newspapers in Manhattan announcing themselves ready and willing to take up the night and day vigil at the dials, and claiming fluency in nearly all languages.

Actually shortwave had been, for some time, included in the calculations of many news gatherers, pulse readers and statesmen. In the game of make-believe and double talk which the Germans had been playing for some years it had long been recognized that what they *said* they meant and what they *really* meant had to be carefully separated. There were propaganda analysts who had studied German propaganda work habits during successive blackmailing campaigns and who felt confident that they would guess by the rise and fall of vilification of intended victims just how serious or imminent actual action was likely to be. Fanciful or not, this how-to-anticipate-the-Germans system had many advocates in Europe. Europeans, it will be recalled, are also devoted to systems for breaking the bank at Monte Carlo.

The first day of war, when it finally came on September 3, 1939, was literally a parade of sensational broadcasts. In eighteen hours American listeners heard these:

1. Declaration of war against Germany by Britain and France
2. British Empire hookup for King George's address
3. Speech by Premier Neville Chamberlain
4. Speech by President Roosevelt
5. Speech by Premier Mackenzie King of Canada
6. News of the torpedoing of a transatlantic liner

The *cognoscenti* in Europe especially understood the importance of radio in terms of the all-important appeal to American public opinion. This appeal began at once when the *Athenia* went down. It suited the purposes of the Germans to pretend for a time that they had not launched the lethal torpedo. The world, and especially the United States, was fed fanciful tales by shortwave that the British had destroyed their own property and killed their own colleagues in order to secure the sympathy of neutrals and to focus moral disapproval upon the Germans. Ultimately the Germans admitted they had sunk the *Athenia*, indeed claimed it as an important victory, but for a little while it was clever of them to befog the issue.

Presently another unprecedented radio event came along. A Yankee film salesman employed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Montevideo, Uruguay, was hired by cable to cover the Battle of the *Graf Spee* for an American network. Without previous radio experience this film salesman stood upon the shore of the River Platte and, in full view, broadcast a sensational eyewitness description of the scuttling of a modern battleship.

In 1939 and early 1940 the British public was in a mood to be amused by "Lord Pecksniff Haw Haw, The Phoney Peer of Zeesen." This was William Joyce, a renegade, semiliterary London hoodlum

who had been associated with Sir Oswald Mosley's British fascists. At \$75 a week he was now a German propaganda personality and the world's first self-proclaimed broadcasting traitor. Joyce had a good radio voice and his spoofs at the old school tie were rather bright. At any rate for the time being the British were intrigued by these radio caricatures of the upper classes derived in part, or at least reminiscent of, P. G. Wodehouse's popular fictional character, that week-ending silly billy and half-wit, Bertie Wooster. (In January 1946 Lord Haw Haw was hanged by the neck until dead in a British prison.)

A German attempt to repeat their "satirical success" in the French language via Radio Stuttgart fell flat, the French becoming enraged and declining to see the fun. Haw Haw was German radio's sole achievement in the department of humor. Satire was not their dish. Radio Stuttgart did score in French with a line of anti-British goods. This was about the time Lord Haw Haw himself was switching from burlesquing the English ruling class to anti-American propaganda. After 1930 the Nazi satellite stations in Madrid, Vichy and Rome began a steady rat-a-tat of anti-Yanqui propaganda at Central and South America, and for the benefit of the more remote republics of South America they also managed to "explain" their repeated invasions of other countries as not really their fault, but Britain's.

For a time Adolph Hitler's own speeches had been rebroadcast on American stations with a running English translation superimposed. When the general manager of the Don Lee network on the Pacific Coast, after one of Hitler's more venomous harangues, ordered, "No more Hitler speeches on these stations!" he was promptly criticized by some citizens on the grounds that barring Der Führer from America was un-American.

The Germans themselves were never forgiving when their own citizens tuned in programs from foreign lands. Even while Haw Haw was a fad in Britain, the Germans sentenced one Willi Falke

to four years in prison, loss of his civil rights, and confiscation of his radio. Willi had indulged an impure curiosity for the BBC comments of J. B. Priestley.

One myth of the period credited the Deutschlandsender boys with the ability imperceptibly to fuse a German wavelength with the wavelength of a foreign station and, when both waves were perfectly synchronized, the Gestapo would then break out with a pandemonium of revolver shots, catcalls and cowbells, all of which telltale noises would supposedly advertise the location all over Germany of those burghers who were bending an illegal ear.

Men wise in such matters merely smiled at these tall tales, convinced that with so many snoopers and stool pigeons the Nazi regime needed no radio cowbells or catcalls. However a number of ingenious stunts have been authenticated during the war. Underground radio stations, often set up in trucks or barns, and moving about to avoid detection, were used by resistance elements all over Europe. It was the Russians who introduced "ghost voices" on German newscasts to heckle the speakers.

Hearsay regarding such wartime feats probably accounted in part for the fantastic folklore that, for a while, seemed to be developing among some Americans with regard to the power of radio to win battles, influence history, remake the world. Radio was new, dramatic, potent and, above all, a twentieth-century gadget. Who was preventing it from doing its stuff? An earnest delegate to an American convention in the spring of 1941 stood up and reported that he had heard of Nazi submarines lurking off Boston and Nazi espionage agents loitering around certain bars, and he wanted to ask this question: what was radio going to do about it? It was suggested in reply that perhaps the United States Coast Guard had jurisdiction in the first instance and the FBI in the second and it was really not radio's responsibility.

By the time Pearl Harbor Sunday rolled around late in 1941, many Americans were perhaps rather calloused to radio sensations.

That may account for the irate telephone calls to the switchboard of WOR, New York, demanding that the station "cease interrupting the football game with those special news bulletins from Hawaii." America itself had just been catapulted into war but this fact seemed not to register with or interest some people.

For a long time men of American radio had been walking a chalk line between the "isolationists" and the "interventionists." Now they could take off their coats and go to work, sure at last of American policy and who were America's enemies. Clarence Menser at NBC promptly launched a program starkly labeled "Let's Fight." It was heard at 8:45 A.M. and was designed to help listeners start the day hopping mad. Reviewing the four-network series, "This is War," a sardonic radio critic wrote, "This series is apparently determined to be downright hostile to our enemies, rating them as considerably worse than misguided."

A woman worried just then about the bad name of propaganda suggested to Edward Bernays, the public-relations counsel, a substitute designation, "incumation." As she explained, "incu" was from "incubate," "mation" from "information." A trade debate developed in radio as to whether programs were too "tough" or too "Pollyanna."

Three days after Pearl Harbor Eddie Cantor introduced on his air show a brand-new song, "We Did It Before, We Can Do It Again," which would in due course have a maddening effect upon our allies. Broadway songwriters had meanwhile tried and failed to repeat 1917-1918 methods. Rhymes for Japs—"saps," "taps" and "maps" were the best they could dream up. One song did get published, "Goodbye, Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama." It was three years premature.

Many of the early expectations with regard to American radio once war came now sound weird. One small-town station manager put it facetiously but not too extremely when he said, "Many of us thought the government would take over all stations and all of

us station managers would become majors in the Army." Instead stations were merely asked please not to conduct any more ad lib, unrehearsed, man-in-the-street interviews and not to broadcast weather reports as these might help U-boat captains. Nor was there a propaganda czar.

This was the period of the war when nearly everybody was worrying about the other fellow's "morale." Congressman Emanuel Celler was asking, "What shall our attitude be aenent radio commentators who make prophecies? Do their predictions aid the enemy? If disheartening predictions prove false, have they unnecessarily hurt home-front morale?" Professor Max Lerner declared, "There is something a little hypochondriac in our preoccupation with our own patriotic temperature." A twelve-year-old American child caught the idiom of the times. Denied a permanent wave for her hair on the grounds of her youth and the expense, she could snap back devastatingly at her mother, "But, Mama, think of my morale!"

Domestic information for the people at home was entrusted originally to the Office of Facts and Figures under Archibald MacLeish and subsequently to its successor, the Office of War Information under Elmer Davis. An active radio division of the OWI was immediately established under W. B. Lewis, formerly a CBS vice-president. This radio division got together with the several national networks and the agencies representing the big advertisers to set up and administer a so-called "network allocation plan" for the scientific distribution through radio of the various messages and interpretative material which the authorities deemed vital to the successful prosecution of the war. None of this went forward unchallenged. The OWI was charged with "timidity" and with "irresponsibility." Whether it attempted too little or too much the task was immensely complicated. Obviously it was never wholly free of partisan politics. There was, also, the embarrassment of converting a nation nurtured for twenty years on the

dogma of pacifism and the debunking of propaganda to the state of mind thought desirable in fighting another war. Quite sincerely millions of Americans questioned whether they had the necessary purity to condemn other peoples no matter how mountainous the testimony against them.

In a memorandum dated December 14, 1942, the OWI informed radio that its "Special Features Plan" (actually there were four plans) was set up and operating:

1. *The Network Allocation Plan* which systematically utilizes all network programs, both sustaining and commercial, for action messages (what to do) concerning all phases of the war effort.
2. *The Announcement Plan* for local stations, which is synchronized with the Network Allocation Plan to provide additional facilities on the community level for the same type of war information.
3. *The Transcription Plan* for local stations whereby the various transcription efforts of the several Government war agencies are pulled together in one strip package to provide greater audiences for understanding messages (what you should *know*) about all phases of the war effort.
4. *The Special Assignment Plan* whereby network programs, both sustaining and commercial, which *volunteer* to help the war information effort over and above the Allocation Plan are systematically assigned *understanding* (as against *action*) themes.

And, continued the government memorandum:

All four of these plans are being carefully synchronized and balanced to give proper emphasis and weight to the various war information subjects needing exposition. Plans are also under way to check constantly the amount of war information being broadcast under these plans and its impact upon the listening public, to guard against surfeit which might cause a decrease in general radio listening.

The OWI listed subjects to be emphasized as:

1. *The Issues* involved in this war.
2. The nature of *the Enemy*.
3. The nature of *the United Nations*.
4. *War Aims* and postwar plans of the United Nations.
5. *The Fighting Forces*, their jobs, training, morale.
  - (a) The Army.
  - (b) The Navy, including the Marines, Coast Guard, and the Merchant Marine.
6. *The Working Forces*, and the need for all-out production.
  - (a) Management.
  - (b) Labor.
  - (c) Man-power mobilization.
7. *The Home Forces*, and the need for all-out civilian participation.
  - (a) Sacrifice, and anti-inflation measures: rationing, conservation, taxes, War Bonds and savings.
  - (b) Nutrition and health.
  - (c) Relocation in habits and thinking.

As to expense:

The OWI Radio Bureau can and will help in many directions, both so far as costs and cooperation are concerned. We can and will persuade talent, writers, and directors that these are the war shows to which they should make the contributions they have all been offering. We can and will ask the stations for their utmost cooperation in carrying and publicizing these programs.

Illustrative of the widespread fear of artificially manufactured

"hatred" was the reaction at the annual Institute for Education by Radio which met in Columbus under Ohio State University auspices in the spring of 1942. The radio writer Arch Oboler presented an impassioned plea for a stronger line against fascism. Oboler advocated a "tough" attitude in the manner of the Russians. But his audience of educators, broadcasters, representatives of social-service groups and churches was of divided mind. Many of them shied away instinctively from an emotional binge in the name of patriotism. Oddly enough the rebuttal to Oboler was made by an Englishman, Stephen Fry of the British Broadcasting Corporation. When the chairman of the Institute meeting, H. L. MacCarty, invited Fry to give his views the Englishman outspokenly condemned resort to the "hate" technique of World War I. It had failed then and it would fail again, he argued. More than that, it was unnecessary. Oboler at once denied that he preached hatred of persons or populations but he reiterated his conviction that America was namby-pamby about the war, that the menace of fascism was underplayed and that it was not only proper but indispensable that Americans learn to hate what Germany and Japan had done and were doing.

These divisions of opinion continued throughout the nation. They directly concerned broadcasters and the wartime interpretation of operation in the public interest. The radio businessman tended to be appreciative of the reasonableness and restraint exhibited by the OWI and relieved that there were no grandiose schemes for wholesale manipulation of public opinion. There was little taste among responsible leaders for any campaign to dull the senses of the American people into mass subservience. Some Americans who regarded war hopefully as the great speeder-upper of processes and trends dear to their private views were necessarily impatient of the cautious pace. The OWI hoped rather than commanded that certain materials be given the public and consistently operated through existing business channels rather than

sought to supplant them. The OWI acted as if its existence was temporary and its mission practical rather than hysterical.

It was in almost a spirit of how-typical-this-is-of-democracy that some grumblers exploited their discovery that professional radio had no Goebbelsian master plan for war. One actually heard Americans boasting that nobody would ever catch Germany at the outbreak of war—any war—with complete blueprints for everything. Apparently it was not sufficiently spectacular that (a) the leaders of the radio industry had conferred periodically before and after September 3, 1939, to determine the nature of broadcasting in the public interest with the world on fire, or that (b) professional radio's own informational service on a round-the-globe and round-the-clock basis had been enormously expanded through the middle thirties. Not having a master plan for war convicted American radio of being hopelessly democratic.

One immediate and grateful result of Pearl Harbor was to free broadcasters overnight of the ordeal of constantly umpiring feline and canine bouts between interventionists and isolationists. A certain clarity of purpose was now possible and radio program builders quickly prepared to do a job for Uncle Sam. It was only a week after the Japanese attack on Hawaii that a one-time program called "We Hold These Truths" evoked a rather amazing response from the American public. Still stunned from grim events they could not as yet fully understand, Americans found in a broadcast commemorating their Bill of Rights a passionate eloquence they could at least feel. Actually Norman Corwin and his documentary-type of program had both long been familiar phenomena of the American radio scene, but it was on this night of December 15, 1941, that millions of Americans and myriads of government functionaries first really discovered the man and his talent. Both were promptly adopted as the archetypes, and the future nature of hundreds of war-message programs to come was thereby predetermined. "This is War," entirely produced and largely written by Corwin,

was the first tangible result. Financed jointly by America's four coast-to-coast networks, the series was heard over some five hundred and fifty stations, probably the largest number of stations ever simultaneously linked for thirteen consecutive weeks. (A recorded series, "You Can't Do Business with Hitler," produced by the OWI at one period was on seven hundred and three scattered stations at varying hours and different days.)

One thing became rapidly evident. There was, if anything, too much war-program activity. Broadcasters engaged in a rivalry that needed to be brought under scientific scheduling control. Out of the industry conferences, in which the influence of the Advertising Council headed by Chester LaRoche was conspicuous, there developed the "network allocation plan," first of a series of related and co-ordinated plans all designed to balance war programs, both commercial and noncommercial, so that certain war topics would not be excessively stressed while others remained largely neglected. This called for constant liaison between professional radio and the OWI's own radio division and periodic re-examinations of policy. The radio industry did most of the planning, writing, directing and casting of programs. OWI was the funnel through which the whole of government passed requests for help.

One dispute over program technique existed from the first. Some advertising agencies insisted that a war message should be regarded and treated as sales copy, separate and apart from the entertainment, for punchiness and clarity. The contrary viewpoint advocated the incorporation of war messages into the text proper or story line of programs, in the manner of, say, Kate Smith, the "Aldrich Family," "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Easy Aces," "We, the People at War." This quarreling over methods was the best possible sign of competitive enthusiasm for the job. It was the adman's response to the creative challenge presented by OWI.

Spokesmen for OWI were frank in stating on various occasions

that psychological war could not be conducted solely from a building in Washington, that the voluntary collaboration of intelligent groups of private citizens was indispensable. Hence the OWI was gratified to have the several media go to work in terms of their (the media's) own best thought and inspiration. Hence OWI welcomed the aid of such private clusters of patriotic endeavor as the Writers' War Board, the Advertising Council, the Hollywood Mobilization, the National Association of Broadcasters, the Council for Democracy, the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, the Council on Books in Wartime, and so on.

In May of 1942 the National Association of Broadcasters held its annual convention at the Hotel Statler in Cleveland. The delegates met in a mood of mingled anxiety and excitement. There were all sorts of rumors about the intentions of the government. Archibald MacLeish, Director of the Office of Facts and Figures, was scheduled as feature speaker. He was a personage considered privy to the drift of White House thinking and his remarks were eagerly awaited by the broadcasters. Previous assurances that there would be no government take over had not allayed the fears of radio businessmen. Hence they leaned forward intently when Mr. MacLeish began to speak. By the time he was through they were considerably relaxed.

What MacLeish declared Uncle Sam would ask of radio businessmen was not their plants, not even any stated amounts of their air time, but rather the freely given support of their professional experience as broadcasters and the enthusiasm of their patriotism as Americans.

The government, he implied, trusted the broadcasters and knew that the broadcasters would scrupulously respect censorship (which was to be voluntarily enforced by all media) and would neither skimp nor neglect the job of information and exhortation throughout the war.

Washington wanted no part of government operation. It wanted only intelligence and zeal from radio men. This was a pleasant melody for the NAB delegates. They effusively gave assurance of their good intentions. They would come through. And in the years that followed, they did. Radio's total war record was impressive.

But some shocking intelligence awaited the delegates to the Cleveland convention. At a breakfast committee meeting of the NAB's own "foreign language group" it was revealed that only yesterday, so to speak, enemy agents had been exploiting a number of American wavelengths. Managers of polyglot stations, unable to understand or speak the languages in which their broadcasts were conducted, had too often relied upon the professed integrity and supposed loyalty to America of certain free-lance announcers who had taken their ideological leads, and perhaps some part of their income, from the German and Italian consulates. These radio announcers had been able to function quite freely since they arranged their own advertising contacts, wrote their own copy, acted as their own censors. Now it was charged that some of the men were still broadcasting even though, with the declaration of war, they dissembled their true sentiments.

The scandal of such accusations demanded investigation and preventive measures. *Variety* called the disclosures in Cleveland "a startling picture of laxity, indifference and stupidity." The failure of the stations to monitor the foreign tongues was the nub of the trouble. Hastily leaders in the group banded together, formed a Foreign Language Broadcasters Wartime Control, and, for the first time, proceeded to document their own practices and dossier their own staffs. Under the spotlight of criticism information about foreign-language broadcasting became available. In all, two hundred local stations devoted some part, often the predominant part, of their hours to linguals. A total of thirty foreign tongues was spoken on the American radio. A breakdown showed:

<i>Language</i>	<i>Number of Stations</i>
Polish . . . . .	84
Italian . . . . .	66
Spanish . . . . .	58
German . . . . .	30
Greek . . . . .	25
Jewish . . . . .	22
Hungarian . . . . .	20
Swedish . . . . .	18
Portuguese . . . . .	16
Lithuanian . . . . .	16
French . . . . .	15
Czech . . . . .	14
Finnish . . . . .	14
Ukrainian . . . . .	13
Slovak . . . . .	11
Norwegian . . . . .	9
Russian . . . . .	7
Rumanian . . . . .	6
Croatian . . . . .	5
Serbian . . . . .	5
Danish . . . . .	4
Albanian . . . . .	2
Arabic . . . . .	2
Armenian . . . . .	2
Chinese (Cantonese) . . . . .	2
Dutch . . . . .	2
Mesquakie . . . . .	1
Slovene . . . . .	1
Syrian . . . . .	1

Mesquakie is the language of the Sac and Fox Indians and is broadcast only over Station KFGQ, Boone, Iowa. Albanian is heard in Boston, Arabic in Detroit. Chinese, of course, would be anticipated in San Francisco, but perhaps not Polish in Sheridan, Wyoming. In general the pattern of foreign-language broadcasting overlays the familiar pattern of immigrant "colonies" in America. There is a Polish radio as there is a Polish cinema in

Buffalo and Detroit. The Italian radio belt runs west from Manhattan and Bridgeport through Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Erie, Wheeling. Finnish appears on radio stations in Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

Foreign-language broadcasting was immediately debated with the traditional pros and cons of the "Americanization" arguments. Those who favored the utter rubbing out of all vestiges of the Old World patterns were inclined to deplore lingual radio as they deplored journalism. Cultural ties with the motherland were better severed clean, it was contended. A continuous rekindling of old emotions created ambivalence. Immigrants should not be encouraged to indulge in nostalgia for their yesterdays. Others reasoned otherwise, argued that the immigrants should be encouraged to retain old folkways and to cherish their memories, enriching America with the culture of older societies. Those who favorably regarded the use of alien tongues frowned upon the runaway tactics of those radio stations whose response to criticism was not to improve but to drop lingual programs. They contended that if it had been in the public interest during peace to broadcast in foreign languages, it was doubly so in wartime where an urgent need existed to secure the understanding and co-operation of that portion of a polyglot democracy which was unsure in its use of the English language.

Persons wise in fascistic tactics thought they recognized a familiar pattern on the foreign-language stations. German programs delivered pro-Nazi news "sincerely" and "feelingly" while adopting a sneering manner for pro-democracy items, they felt. There was a calculated emphasis on German marching songs. It was especially irritating that the Germany of Hitler and 1940 was "symbolized" by the same catch phrases and music that belonged to an earlier Reich. Nor was it overlooked that programs of German language arias had a habit of skipping credits when the singer happened to be Jewish.

Investigators for the FCC and the FBI took up the trail of con-

spiracy but with what results nobody was in a position to know. A Harvard professor arranged a house-to-house survey among Italian families in Boston in an attempt to correlate their political opinions with their radio listening habits but the findings were more provocative than conclusive. When the finger of suspicion pointed to a Ukrainian announcer in one Eastern community he fought back, counteraccusing the station which discharged him. The labor union to which he appealed for support fully sustained the station and excoriated the announcer as a notorious partisan of the Axis.

The hubbub over foreign-language programs subsided but the debate had made it apparent that local radio, like an iceberg, was not all on the surface.

As early as 1936 the possibilities of propaganda via linguals became known when a newspaper in Cleveland uncovered the existence of an organization to handle the distribution of made-in-Berlin radio transcriptions. These special recordings were outwardly innocuous. Stout Wagnerian stuff, good Beethoven, jolly waltzes. But every now and again the music stopped and a Nazi spieler blandly sold pan-Germanism to American listeners.

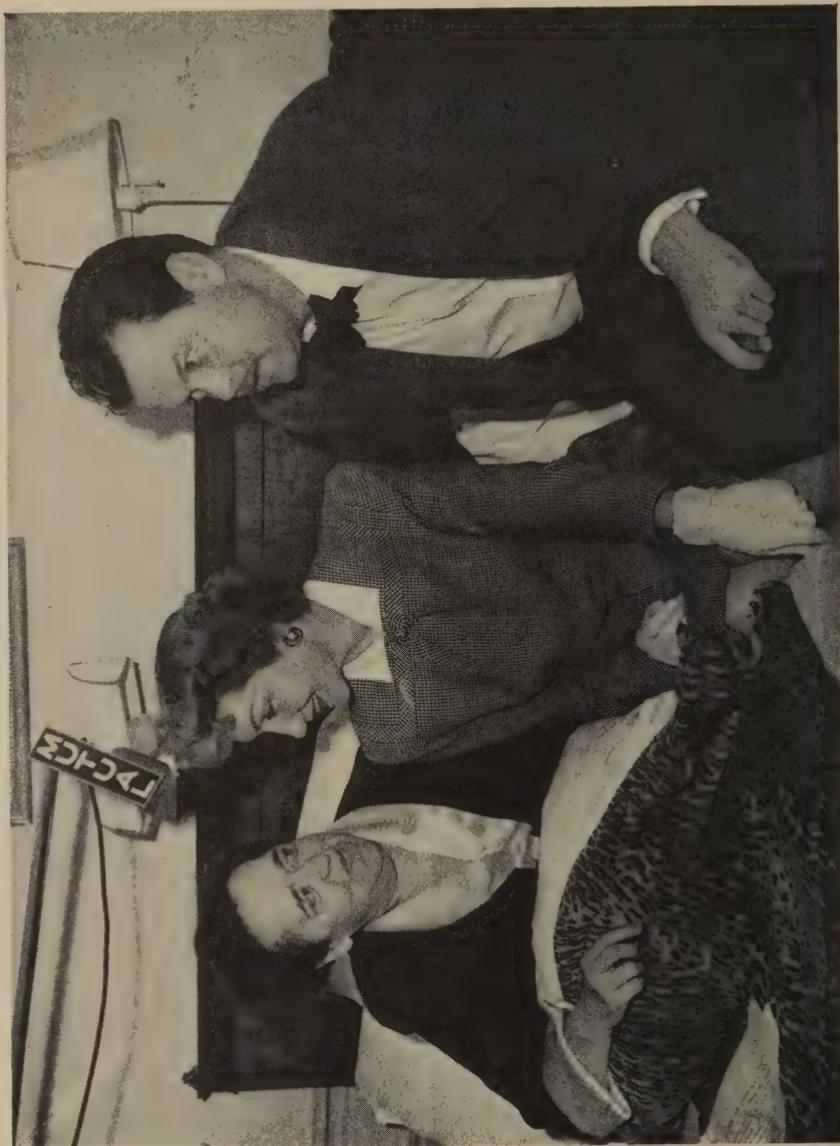
It was again in Cleveland that local stations worked out a detailed code governing lingual practice. A Nationalities Broadcasting Association operated as a nonprofit organization and was recognized by all stations. Its secretary-treasurer, Frederick Wolf, was empowered to act as the Will Hays of the local language broadcasts, seeing to it that regulations prevailed. All foreign copy had to be submitted, together with English translations, at least forty-eight hours before airing. Each foreign-language broadcaster pledged that once approved no alteration whatsoever in copy would be made. Any infraction of this pledge carried an automatic cancellation of program and ouster from the official association. No plays or sketches in foreign languages were sanctioned, not for fear of propaganda, but rather because of the local radiomen's conviction

*Courtesy of "Give and Take"*

"Audience participation" means just that



*Courtesy of Harold Stein, Mutual Broadcasting System*  
Broadcasting a bedside chat (Elsa Maxwell, Claudette Colbert, Orson Welles)



tion that the American-born children of the foreign colonies have only a routine knowledge of their mother tongue and cannot grasp "literature." All commercial announcements were fifty percent in English and the total amount of talk on any program was limited. A definite percentage of the time had to be bona fide entertainment, music or singing.

To prove their patriotism the foreign-language stations all over the United States quickly hopped on the band wagon after the Cleveland exposé and carried heavy schedules of government messages.

Meanwhile the Office of War Information became an elaborate organization. Practical suggestions were offered. "What radio says must be authentic, well considered, simply stated. . . . Don't make the enemy an object of humor. Beware of ridiculing him in ways that may lead the public to underestimate his strength, to become complacent, to slacken the intensity of its efforts. . . ."

There were rusty and overused words that should be avoided, the OWI pointed out. "Sabotage" should be employed sparingly. Dramatic writers should not exaggerate by saying, "If a man doesn't show up for work, it's sabotage. If he doesn't vote, it's sabotage. If he goes Sunday driving, it's sabotage." They were also advised to avoid "exterminating" the enemy as extermination was the German, not the American, policy. Nor did Americans "conquer." Instead we "liberated."

Simultaneously there was marked concern about the quality and correctness of public opinion in Latin lands. America entered shortwave propaganda with a lavish program that called for "selling" Yankee culture to the Latins. Under the stimulation of Nelson Rockefeller our best programs were rebroadcast. Hence the spectacle of Costa Ricans and Panamanians tuning in on Edgar Bergen's ventriloquial dummy Charlie McCarthy. Only it seems the Costa Ricans and Panamanians didn't listen for the impudent dummy's wisecracks but for aid in their study of English. Charlie

McCarthy's diction, not his personality, was what appealed to the Latins.

Even the Germans provided, unconsciously, some war humor. The Goebbels word-factory screeched blasts at various individuals in the democracies. Dorothy Thompson was denounced as an American Amazon because she failed to agree, as did millions of German women, that Adolph Hitler was handsome.

During the war years the radio commentator was venerated as a man—or woman—who supposedly knew more than he told. That myth got pretty well shattered before V-E and V-J Days rolled around. But meantime this latter-day form of soothsaying was financially remunerative in the extreme. Commentators receiving \$1,000 a week were quite common in the flush of the market. Some were so wise or at least so popular that they got \$4,000 and more a week. After all they had taken over the thinking for millions of people. There were commentators, too, who specialized in silver linings on days of especially disastrous Allied defeats. They made people feel good when there was little to feel good about.

The radio commentator has undoubtedly passed his zenith. He was, sometimes, a genuine savant, responsible, conscientious, conservative in statement and deduction. Again he was flashy, shallow, catering to the mob. Good, bad and indifferent, he helped win the war. He's sure of it.

When D-Day came along and Allied troops plunged into Normandie, radio reporters, with portable microphones strapped to their backs or the backs of assistants, stood by in LST boats or half-tracks to describe events. These broadcasts were mostly "delayed" for censorship reasons and were sent overseas hours or days late by transcription. They were not less revealing on that account. One American representative, George Hicks of the American Broadcasting Company (née the Blue Network) became literally famous as the result of his eyewitness descriptions.

It was at the battlefronts, of course, that the more spectacular radio special events took place. Getting radio entertainment to the

troops and getting radio news of the boys to the folks back home were the big tasks.

There were other, more bizarre, uses of radio equipment. As radio teams advanced in Europe they used loudspeaker horns to boom appeals to the German soldiers. The idea was to use old-line American radio salesmanship to talk the enemy into surrendering voluntarily. It saved American lives if isolated pockets could be dissolved with words rather than with bayonets and flame throwers. The trick worked surprisingly well and the radio teams were much excited by their success. It was just like selling soap in the U.S.A. One witty officer suggested:

"Say, we ought to tell the Germans to be sure and mention our call letters when they give themselves up."

Upon the immense canvas of war radio painted a story of Jules Verne prediction come true. Radio, of course, was an inclusive term. Shortwave counted importantly and helped mightily to hold the British Commonwealth of Nations together during the dark years of 1940-1942. Shortwave in twoscore tongues was a voice in the politics of the Near East and the Far East. Radio affected attitudes, galvanized resistance movements, influenced the surrender of naval vessels. The Allies recognized the value of radio—whether long wave, shortwave, medium wave—not only in the instruction but in the diversion of troops. On the fighting front as on the home front the planning and execution of war broadcasts were accounted a vital consideration in winning the war. Not the least result of broadcasting in the United States was the stupendous sales successes of the various war-bond drives. All media of course shared the responsibility and the kudos but radio because of its physical nature had definitely added a value lacking in the previous war when Liberty-bond salesmen never possessed a convenient and effective method of reaching remote places.

Broadcasters developed a good deal of assurance and satisfaction as the long war progressed to its final conclusion. They thought of themselves as in an advanced firing position in the battle of ideas

and information. Operational problems were distressing. Tubes, microphones, turntables and everything else became unobtainable. As a young man's business, radio suffered severe percentage losses of man power to the draft boards. But with all the tensions and anxieties of wartime operations radiomen believed they could fairly regard their work as manifestly in the public interest, manifestly competent. They would have appreciated acknowledgment of that in the FCC's Blue Book of March 1946.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### CAREERS IN RADIO

**F**RANK MULLEN, vice-president and general manager of NBC, called the growth of his network a story of "typically American enterprise, whose whole existence and success have been developed through public demand, public assistance and public endorsement. Mostly however," he added, "it is a story of people." Buildings, transmitters, wires, microphones, cables, dynamos and control boards—all these were the physical properties. "Behind the maze of scientific and mechanical equipment are the human brain and heart that make it all work." "People" means owners and managers, actors, writers, musicians, arrangers, researchers, librarians, clerks, secretaries, receptionists. "People" means salesmen, lawyers, engineers, publicists, traffic managers, executives.

Some of the personal career stories in broadcasting verge on the fanciful. Certain men fortunate enough to secure licenses in populous markets have prospered beyond their fondest imaginings. In the beginning and still today radio was a glamorous business because of this aspect of relatively sudden opulence. Actually of course it is unrealistic to overstress any gold-strike angle for, while possible, it was not typical. Small stations, and most of them have been, have been mostly small businesses. A distinction needs to be made, of course, between the broadcaster who is an owner (i.e. licensee) or just an employee. This separation of owners and representatives of owners is usually quite evident at NAB conventions. Men bearing the title "general manager" vary enormously in personal wealth and importance and independent power to make decisions.

A radio set maker who became a great success in broadcasting, Powel Crosley, Jr., of Cincinnati, was mentioned in Chapter

Three. Crosley set forth in 1921 to purchase one of the new toys for his small son. The cheapest radio set then on the market sold for \$130. As a substitute for such a costly plaything Crosley bought the parts and built his son a set at home for \$35. That fired his imagination. Ultimately a woodworking factory which he had previously acquired was put to turning out Harko, Senior, a set that sold for \$20. By 1922 he was making 500 of them every day. Meantime he had begun experimentally broadcasting from his home. Over and over he played the record "Song of India" and asked all who heard to telephone him. Six years later he had brought his WLW ahead, step by step, to a power of 50,000 watts.

Neither broadcasting nor set making could absorb all of Crosley's energies. He manufactured electrical refrigerators, small-sized cars, a contrivance for treating baldness and other medicinal products. He putters and investigates plans and expands incessantly. He now owns the Cincinnati Reds, a major baseball team, was a founder of, but later withdrew from partnership in, the Mutual Network. In 1945 Crosley sold out his industrial holdings including WLW for \$22,000,000.

Few broadcasters have the variegated past that Leo Fitzpatrick of WJR, Detroit, traces. As a boy in 1909 he sang in a nickelodeon, offering "A Bird in Nellie's Hat" and "You Never Spoke to Me Before That Way." In the following years he was a Wells Fargo truck driver, soda jerker, bellhop, salesman, reporter, enlisted man in the Navy, press agent for circus acts, and a racing driver. He also promoted wrestling matches and sold oil burners. Ultimately he was on the Kansas City *Star*, which sent him in 1921 to New York City to investigate this new thing—radio. George Logan, his managing editor, later installed him to head the *Star's* radio station WDAF, brushing aside Fitzpatrick's remonstrances that he still didn't know anything about radio with the remark that nobody else did either. WDAF was to become famous and Fitzpatrick with it. He ad libbed his way to popular favor as "The Merry Old Chief" and ultimately the Redpath Chautauqua Bureau sent

him on tour. Fitzpatrick, with his wife along, did 105 towns in 106 days. His wife got typhoid fever and the profits went to the doctors.

Back in Kansas City Fitzpatrick put on a big radio show importing other radio personalities of 1925. Some 100,000 persons paid to see Fitzpatrick and his troupe, including Bill Hay of KFXX, Hastings, Nebraska; George Hay, "The Old Solemn Judge" of WLS, Chicago; Gene Rouse of WOAW, Omaha, and John Schilling of WHB, Kansas City. The show made a net profit of \$5,700.

The real business fable of Fitzpatrick's rise begins, however, later in 1925 when he went to Detroit as program director of WJR, then owned by the Jewett Radio & Phonograph Manufacturing Company. In no time at all the ghost appeared and the payroll didn't. Fitzpatrick got the job of liquidating and salvaging. Most of the prominent businessmen of Detroit spurned the chance to purchase the radio station, which Fitzpatrick had shrewdly segregated from the other assets, but G. A. Richards, who was a successful automobile distributor, recognized the glint of future gold. Today WJR is probably one of the three or four most prosperous stations in the United States.

Richards has also acquired WGAR, Cleveland, and KMPC, Beverly Hills. In the latter property his business partners since 1940 include Paul Whiteman, Harold Lloyd, Bing Crosby and "Amos 'n' Andy." WGAR, Cleveland, is operated by John Patt who began at the Kansas City *Star* where he became aide to Fitzpatrick. The Patts have become one of radio's few "families." Brother John, Brother Ralph, Brother Fred and Brother Bob are all with different radio stations.

There is a singular lack of common background or common experience among radio people. True, many of the original engineers were telephone employees and many of the salesmen once worked for magazines. But among the myriads of individuals concerned with radio are found all sorts of backgrounds. M. H. Aylesworth was a press agent for a utilities company before he was president

of the National Broadcasting Company. Edward S. Klauber, one-time executive vice-president of Columbia, had been a city editor on the *New York Times*. John Royal, NBC vice-president, formerly managed Keith's Theatre in Cleveland. William Bacher, the radio producer, was once a dentist. Walter Craig, of Benton & Bowles, used to be a romantic juvenile in musical comedy. L. B. Wilson of WCKY, Covington, Kentucky, before he was a broadcaster was a vaudeville acrobat, a politician, a banker, a theater owner.

In 1934 *Variety* counted twenty-two women occupying fairly responsible executive positions in radio. Bertha Brainard was commercial program manager at NBC. Margaret Cuthbert then managed the NBC speakers bureau. Elizabeth Black had the spending of vast sums of Ruthrauf & Ryan radio advertising money. Nila Mack was in charge of children's programs at Columbia. Lucille Singleton ran CBS auditions. Leah Rule was traffic manager of a short-lived network once launched by Ed Wynn and a group of friends. Bernice Judis at WNEW, New York, Selma Seitz, WFAS, White Plains, Edythe Fern Melrose at WJAY, Cleveland, Doris Keane at WWAE, Hammond, Indiana, and the two Doernbrecher sisters at KVI, Tacoma, managed radio stations. When John Iraci died he was succeeded in the management of WOW, New York, by his feminine assistant, Hyla Kiczales.

As previously mentioned, broadcasting is not numerically an important industry. It offers attractive careers but not necessarily room for a lot of newcomers. As time goes by and employees pass along to higher posts of responsibility it becomes evident that the turnover among executives is not notable. The old employee begins to develop. H. V. Kaltenborn formed a Twenty Year Club of those who could point to two decades of association with radio. Meantime hundreds of secondary and higher educational institutions are giving instruction in radio subjects with the idea in the student's mind that he or she will ultimately obtain employment in the industry. A large percentage of such hopefuls is almost

certainly doomed to disappointment although frequency modulation may open up new business opportunities, and hence jobs, in the next several years.

Radio payroll data in 1939 may be taken as some indication of the numerically limited jobs in certain specific specialties. With jobs divided as between local stations and networks, the many smaller units and the few bigger units, the figures ran as follows:

	<i>Local Stations Employed</i>	<i>National Networks Employed</i>
Program Directors . . . . .	505	401
Radio Writers . . . . .	556	77
Announcers . . . . .	2,247	125
Staff Musicians . . . . .	1,871	387
Other Artists . . . . .	737	310

Announcers it will be seen are by far the most numerous classification of purely radio talent. They are also very distinctly a radio industry profession.

Announcers have a salary range that is remarkable both for the modesty of starting compensation in the local small-town stations and for the princely stipends paid to those who achieve standout larynx appeal in big-time commercial radio. The local station has often started its announcers at \$20-\$25 a week. A veteran of three or more years on Main Street may receive only \$40-\$45. These are uninflated "normal" averages. They contrast conspicuously with romantic impressions to the contrary. However it is true that some of the star announcers who act as masters of ceremonies or who play a part in a comedy show often attain four figures weekly. To the ordinary ear the difference between the 100-watt voice and the big-time voice will be audible but perhaps not \$750 worth of difference. Personality, showmanship, trade reputation, the old maxim of success attracting success all help explain the situation.

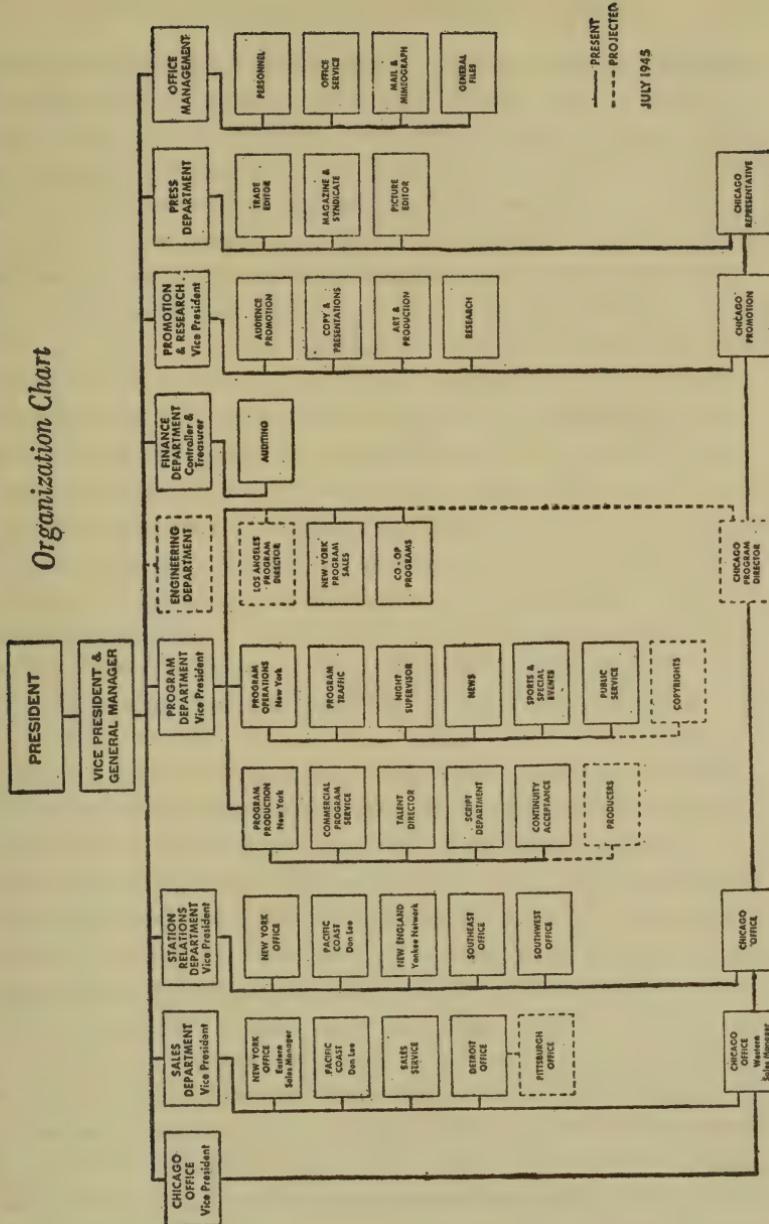
Education and culture play some part in marking off the more distinguished and effective announcers. Brains, quick thinking, superior poise, showmanship, the authoritative manner enter the equation. But providence is entitled to much of the credit, for no amount of poise or command or humor or wit can make an announcer of a man born with a gravel pit for a throat.

There are a number of pronounced business advantages enjoyed by the announcer. The advertiser and the advertising agency are almost always aware of him. By virtue of his connection with the all-important sales message an announcer is a remembered person and never just a voice as is the case with many of the excellent but unbilled supporting actors in a dramatic cast. Announcers to qualify for employment in the big network production offices must usually have had at least three years' prior experience on local stations. Networks insist upon this for it means that the announcer has been seasoned. He has in normal course experienced a great variety of emergencies and special circumstances. His nerve has been developed, his poise tested, his capacity to stand up under the grueling grind of everyday assignments has been proved. But experience alone will not win a network job. The announcer will be put through rigorous auditions. He will be handed sample copy full of obscure words, foreign place names, odd phrasing, tongue twisters and verbal traps. He will be expected to maintain a high average of correct pronunciation, smooth diction and general aplomb. His voice should be pleasant, clear, alive, free of dialect, twang or regional intonation. He must have breath control, timing, coolness. He must be a sight reader capable of top-form performance with little or no rehearsal.

The sports announcer is not necessarily set apart from the workday announcer but this is an area of specialization which leads to extra financial rewards. The sports announcer obviously needs to know sports—especially football, baseball, boxing, basketball, golf, tennis and racing. In some areas he adds hockey,

## MUTUAL BROADCASTING SYSTEM

## *Organization Chart*



wrestling and crew racing. The standards on sports announcing are strict, for fans scream vehemently at errors of judgment, the wrong crew brought across the line first in a close race on a foggy afternoon, a touchback miscalled a safety, a loser in the manly art pictured the winner until his sudden and unforecast collapse. The sports announcer like the sports writer on newspapers is necessarily a man about town who fraternizes with the virtuosos of brawn and nerve and their not always delightful promoters and managers. The sports announcer has to get along.

The talent for ad libbing—or indefinitely prolonged extemporaneous commentary—is conspicuous in sports and other types of radio announcing. Gabriel Heatter catapulted to fame on his *tour de théâtre* the night Hauptmann, the murderer of the Lindbergh baby, was electrocuted. Because of a time mix-up Heatter had to fill some forty-five minutes. He went through this ordeal by verbiage without dropping a syllable or sounding an unprofessional “er” or “uh.” Nothing like it had been witnessed since Lillian Leitzel did 102 consecutive one-arm somersaults over her own shoulder on a trapeze in Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Circus.

Other categories of radio station and radio network employees include clerks, stenographers, secretaries, researchers, receptionists and switchboard operators. The last two jobs are much valued. Conscious as they are of announcing style, radio management usually demands that the voices of those who greet the public at the reception desk or over the telephone shall be clear as a bell, so round, so firm, so fully packed with charm. Pages of both sexes wear uniforms. So do some guards and night watchmen but otherwise the radio employee has no characteristic garb.

Youngsters should of course always be warned of the folly of leaving home to crash either show business or radio with only enough funds for six weeks. They are especially due for rude shocks and galling disillusionments if they have obtained their knowledge of the trade through fan publications, loaded as they

are with day dreams and romantic nonsense about stars, salaries and glamorous environment.

In New York NBC and CBS maintain large staffs of translators and multilingual announcers, directors and singers who operate the networks' shortwave broadcasting activities beamed toward foreign lands. This represents a separate radio world with standards and problems of its own, with separate union contracts, separate program policies, with special relationships with our own government and with the governments of other lands. Both networks are especially active in the radio romancing of the Latin republics. Edmund Chester, once of the United Press and now CBS Director of Shortwave Broadcasting, is an authentic celebrity in Central and South America.

In New York and Hollywood, to a lesser extent in Chicago and a few other cities, radio actors can earn a good or very good livelihood in the free-lance market. They go from program to program, network to network, station to station and over the week their fees amount to a substantial income. There are unknown (to the public) actors who gross from \$20,000 to \$50,000 a year. They are the dependable troupers. Studio-wise, quick to grasp direction, agile and adept, they are preferred list choices for any program producer. All too often the actor gets comparatively little direction in radio. There isn't time. Not with the tendency to hold down on rehearsal pay. Many a daytime serial takes but a single hour rehearsal—and sounds that way. Many actors and actresses come to radio from the theater. Some of them were trained in radio itself. There is always a large reservoir of child actors and quite a number of these have already grown up to assume prominent roles on the air, in the theater, in Hollywood. The American Federation of Radio Artists has around 1,900 members in its New York Chapter so this total may be taken as a census of accepted and accredited professionals. However this does not include some scores of foreign-language actors and others who work for "neighborhood stations."

As with the actors so with the musicians. The calls fall to those musicians who quickly respond to a minimum of actual direction. The orchestra usually reports late, well after the dramatic cast. This is for reasons of economy. It is then necessary to make the short rehearsal time count importantly. Quick readings, quick understandings, quick realization of precisely what the program director and the orchestra conductor want is essential. Hence by an easy logic of circumstance those musicians who prove themselves dependable get the lion's share of the radio work, make the most money and are much envied by their colleagues who are less adept and less used.

The qualities of a studio program director are manifold. To bring all the component elements together, to fuse, weld, blend, pace and unite a motley crew of actors, musicians, sound effects and so on and do all this with a minimum of rehearsal time is a job that demands of the director considerable self-assurance and hard knowledge of his tools, his assistants and his medium. It is frequently said that the urgent and great need of broadcasting for the future next to better writers is directors of a higher level of artistry and personal qualification than has been typical in the past. A criticism leveled at some program directors is that they are overpreoccupied with the mere routine of timing. They are "stop-watch holders" in trade jargon. They do little to interpret the meaning of a script if it be dramatic or the fine nuances if it be musical. This comment of course seldom applies to the great shows, the top twenty or thirty. But even there criticism of the director is sometimes voiced.

Certainly a studio director must have authority and tact. He must induce temperamental people to work with him. Production has been well defined as "the art of getting along with difficult people." He must win respect and yet not bully. Sympathy and perception are necessities. So is firmness of character. While remaining open-minded to suggestion the director must be sure

enough not to permit actors, technicians, assistant directors or engineers to bend or sabotage his plans.

A standard and a sensible way to become a director is first to serve as an assistant director or production man. The assistant director keeps the records and the log of the program. He runs errands, times the show at rehearsal and on the air. He is allowed to direct some of the less important shows in between times and so after a while comes to possess enough experience and self-confidence for graduation. Most directors are men but a proportionately larger number of them have been of the feminine gender.

The radio studio engineer is today, as he always has been in the past, a partner with the director in the final result. He must be, to start with, a man of sharp hearing and the artistic capacity to blend different sounds harmoniously and with due emphasis. The engineer gets many direct cues from the director but he cannot wait upon or rely upon instruction. He is, if he is master of his art, well qualified to give and by studio practice is usually expected to volunteer engineering counsel. It lies within his imaginative manipulation of his knobs, lines and microphones to give tonal brilliance to a broadcast. A mediocre engineer can cast an inexplicable dullness over lines and scenes.

Also highly skilled are the sound-effects technicians who, with the engineer, are indispensable allies in the success of radio's planned make-believe. When not on duty in the studios, sound-effects men are often found in tool rooms experimenting with bells, oscillators, reverberators and all manner of noise-simulating artifices. Like the engineers a sensitively discriminant ear is mandatory.

Another oddity of radio is the specialist in the mimicry of animal cries. A movie director of silent days has made a handsome living in his midyears hiring out as an insistent cat, a whimpering cur, or a scampering hen, as called for in radio scripts. One radio actress found financial success in her development of a highly plausible squalling (to cue) infant.

In the larger broadcasting cities the unionization of radio actors began in 1937. The American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA) affiliated with the Associated Actors and Artists of America, the basic and original A. F. of L. charter. The older actors' unions, all under Four-A's jurisdiction, provided AFRA with an initial loan of \$30,000. AFRA was thus brother-and-debtor to the Actors Equity Association, the Screen Actors Guild and the American Guild of Variety Artists.

Perhaps only a few of the radio actors who joined AFRA in 1937 and thereafter were acquainted with the daddy of all American actor unions, the oddly named White Rats of America (rats was "star" spelled backward) which was founded in 1900 by one hundred and twenty-four charter members including George M. Cohan, Fred Stone, Lew Dockstadter, McIntyre and Heath, Eddie Foy and Frank Cushman. The White Rats' strike of 1901 was a success and many of the managerial abuses of that era were outlawed. In their elation the White Rats themselves decided to enter the field of theatrical booking. Their agent friend, William Morris, warned them that this would split the union into jealous factions. His prediction was fully borne out. After fifteen years of existence the White Rats, divided and weakened by internal bickering, lost another strike and with it lost the union's costly clubhouse on West Forty-sixth Street just off Times Square. But despite its inglorious demise the White Rats had pioneered in the correction of financial irresponsibility among showmen.

The Actors Equity Association on its own closed nearly every dramatic playhouse in Manhattan during 1919 and emerged with a complete victory over the legitimate-theater owners and producers. Thereafter actor unionism spread first to Hollywood (1929), then into radio (1937) and finally, after 1938, into opera, night club and circus fields. In every instance the unions differed as did the types of contract they demanded. But it was stock in trade with all the unions to allege unwarranted and coercive collection of commissions and unfair cancellation. Among some of

the managers and bookers of radio talent there was undoubtedly a due percentage of sharpshooters. Enough that the networks and advertising agencies met with AFRA and after some weeks of negotiations accepted AFRA's work rules and pay scales, thereby forcing the chiselers to do the same. Today the cast of every entertainment broadcast originating in the chief radio centers is a hundred percent AFRA.

Strongest of the unions in radio is the American Federation of Musicians which has, especially under the presidency of James C. Petrillo, aggressively campaigned to increase the employment of musicians by radio stations. A rash of strikes and lockouts ultimately produced two effects: a barrage of editorials aimed at Petrillo and the Lea Bill designed to prevent the A. F. of M. from using "force or threat of force" to secure jobs for its membership. It is anybody's guess as to the final adjudication of the Lea Bill, which some observers consider meaningless so long as the Wagner Act is on the books. While anxious to secure relief from arbitrary ukase, some broadcasters remain unconvinced that punitive legislation is the proper solution.

Other unions in the broadcasting field include the American Communications Association, organized in 1931 and affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations. An A. F. of L. affiliate, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, dating from 1891, also asserts jurisdiction over radio technicians.

The Radio Writers Guild is a branch of the Authors League of America. It was founded in 1938 and has contracts and a guild shop with CBS, NBC and ABC. All staff writers employed by the networks must join the guild and all must receive not less than \$75 per week and \$90 per week after one year on staff. The Radio Directors Guild dates only from 1942 but it has also secured network recognition.

Station and network managements have always valued the services of the radio salesman who may be described simply as the chap who calls upon the agencies and accounts and brings in the busi-

ness. Salesmen are go-getters, by the definition of an earlier epoch. They are outside men in contradistinction to their own superiors, the sales managers, who stay pretty much in their offices, plotting and researching the over-all strategy. The realities of competition force both the salesman and the sales executive to be extraordinarily well informed about not only their own business but the business of their competitors—a fact much appreciated by all trade-paper reporters. In recent years the sale of time has ceased being a cut-and-dried operation and has acquired subtleties. It is now a necessity for a salesman to be first to know about new theories in market research, in program “listening flow” and such developments. He runs the risk of being outsold by any salesman whose line of persuasion is more timely and more scientific.

Hand in hand with the salesmen are the men who devise and develop sales promotion. This is a standard and often well-paid adjunct to salesmanship. By easy logic its apparent sales promotionists do a lot of the thinking for the sales executives and the contact men. Sales promotion savants come, inevitably, into close contact with top management and may indeed imperceptibly melt into the latter.

It is significant that commercial managers have always outranked program managers in salary averages. While this may be deplored and even criticized as nonsensical on the grounds that programs make circulation and popularity and salesmen merely find customers for values already created by programs, the fact remains that the man or woman who brings in the signed contract is especially near and dear to top management. It may be quite wrong and most exasperating that management has a human tendency to think of program makers as “spenders” rather than “getters” but the illusion in favor of salesmanship persists nonetheless.

Salary averages, worked out on the basis of industry data supplied the Federal Communications Commission, illustrate the relativity of job dollar evaluation among radio executives. Weekly

wage averages before the war, when figures were computed, ran as follows:

	<i>Local</i>	<i>Network</i>
	<i>Station Job</i>	<i>Equivalent Job</i>
General Management Executive	. . . \$109	\$381
Sales Executive	. . . . . 84	214
Program Executive	. . . . . 56	185
Publicity Executive	. . . . . 56	143
Engineering Executive	. . . . . 54	161

The above breakdowns should be read as averages, arrived at by combining the weekly salaries of hundreds of executives and dividing by the total number reported to strike the median. There are local station officials who far exceed the above averages and there are network officials who do not equal the figures given as average.

Local salesmen, depending upon the station and competitive situation, are paid by commissions based upon a low—but average—of fifteen percent and a high—but exceptional—rate of forty percent. A well-established home-town radio salesman ranges from \$50 to \$100 weekly with unusual successes running above that figure. Customarily it takes a radio salesman two or three years to build up his clientage to a worth-while point.

Originally a radio salesman meant a seller of radio time. Today there is growing emphasis upon the importance of training and encouraging the salesman also to sell—along with the time—a suitable program produced by either the local station or the network itself, as the case may be. Clearly this widens the usefulness of the salesman as it also places new responsibilities upon him. Howard Meighan, an official of CBS, has put this matter very clearly in an article he wrote:

A few years ago, we came to the conclusion that the whole system of selling the facilities of local radio stations was incorrectly

set up. It followed a system set up by newspapers and magazines over a period of years. That is, a newspaper would employ a salesman, or a sales representative who in turn had salesmen, to sell its space to advertisers. The compensation for this job was based on the amount of space sold. A salesman for the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, for example, would call on the J. Walter Thompson Company and Standard Brands to get the Chase and Sanborn Tea account. If he were successful, he would obtain a commitment for the use of space in the Bulletin. That was the end of his job. He had no interest in how the space was to be used in terms of the advertising theme, or the copy content. It wouldn't have made very much difference if he was interested because he would certainly have no influence on the editorial content of those ads. This was the problem of the advertising agency and the advertiser. Eventually, the Bulletin would get a series of electros or mats for the Chase and Sanborn Tea campaign, the same campaign that would be running simultaneously in other newspapers.

This has been a perfectly satisfactory system for a newspaper, because a newspaper controls its editorial content, which in turn controls its circulation. But radio is different. Radio's editorial matter is made up almost entirely of the programs of its advertisers. While a Chase and Sanborn Tea ad in the Bulletin would have little, if any effect, on the paper's circulation, a Chase and Sanborn Tea program on a radio station would have a substantial effect on the station's circulation. Thus, while the use of space in a newspaper is of little importance to the paper, the use of time is of paramount importance to a radio station.

We, therefore, determined that it was of utmost importance that our salesmen not only sell time but influence the proper use of that time. So we set up a special inducement to our salesmen to interest them in studying programs and selling them hand in hand with the sale of time. They say money makes the mare go. Well—money is the inducement. Our salesmen are paid a salary for handling the job of selling time. The station pays them an additional small commission on the sale of each local live talent program. As you can imagine, this was an important and basic change in the concept of representing a radio station.

Well—what happened? In order to sell a program, a salesman had to know something about programming. More than that, he had to know something about audience tastes in the areas of the

stations he represented. Since it represented money in his pocket, our salesman became quite insistent about knowing more about this subject. And it is for this reason that Columbia-owned stations and Radio Sales have been such ardent disciples and users of radio research.

Radio station executives line up in this general order of rank: general manager, assistant manager, commercial manager, program manager, publicity director, chief engineer, chief announcer. In more recent times stations have included directors of special events, sports, education, women's programs. The news editor, too, has become conventional and in stations above a given size there is customarily a production manager in addition to a program director and also a musical director, supported by music librarians who keep sheet music, phonograph records and electrical transcriptions all properly filed and annotated. In many situations two or more jobs and titles may be combined in a single employee. The publicity director is frequently also the director of special events and the news editor. The director of women's programs is likely to be the director of education on the side. And so on.

It is an accepted credo among many in radio that the best station managers are former salesmen since theirs is the responsibility for showing a profit. By the same general sort of reasoning broadcasters frequently are quoted to the effect that the ideal program director is a man who grew up with the business serving as an announcer, disc jockey, news editor and so on along the route. The program director should know firsthand from working with them the problems of announcers, sportscasters, salesmen and engineers. He must be studio-trained. It is revealing that the CBS program vice-president, Davidson Taylor, and the NBC program vice-president, Clarence Menser, had years of studio experience before they became top executives.

The educational director is a latter-day phenomenon in radio. NBC got Yale's retiring president, James Rowland Angell, as its

educational counselor. CBS recruited Dr. Lyman Bryson from Teacher's College at Columbia, Robert Hudson from the Rocky Mountain Radio Council and Leon Levine from Town Hall, Inc. All over the nation scores of local radio stations have installed an educational director whose task is to maintain contacts with the organizations through which community sentiment is expressed. Interestingly the community council of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has pioneered in creating a municipal radio director. A great number of national organizations interested in service, charity, fund raising and the propagation of viewpoints now employ radio directors. This has become a standard specialty in public relations work generally.

The radio dramatist is about to come into his own after years of semineglect. With the advent of artistic maturity in the industry there has been widespread recognition of the importance of writing. The hack will always exist of course but radio has already produced a number of fine writers. Norman Corwin is by all odds the best-known product of the radio scriptwriting field, but a growing number of able radio writers are now recognized, people like True Boardman, Clifford Goldsmith, George Faulkner, Margaret Lewerth, Sandra Michael, Carlton E. Morse, Frank Wilson, Norman Rosten, Millard Lampell, Joseph Ruscoll, Irving Neiman, Lawrence Menkin, Addie Richton and Lynn Stone.

The beginner in radio writing finds himself in a puzzling position since he is told that to get a job he must have experience but he cannot get experience without a job. Ordinarily he must slave at a little station off in the bush country somewhere. Of course no two writers develop in the same way, at the same rate, or with the same financial results. The staff writer for a station, for a network or for a transcription house of an advertising agency may vary all the way from \$25 a week to \$1,500. In general the money getters in radio writing own their own programs and collect as entrepreneurs rather than as writers.

The conventional statement about radio writing is that it is too

new and too young to have produced literature. By this reckoning literature is viewed as the writing which is preserved, cherished, admired and repeated. Radio not having existed long enough in time, the outpourings of radio writers have not yet been sifted. When the process shall have been completed in the future the net residue will be the literature of radio. Or so goes the conventional explanation.

It is also true that radio writing has until now suffered from the impermanence of its embodiment solely in mimeograph. After the broadcast is over there remain only two or three scripts in private archives. The literary student or critic cannot get at or know about the work unless he heard it in the first instance or unless the script is one of the few selected to be published in book form by an occasional anthologist like Douglas Coulter, Max Wylie or Erik Barnouw.

Before the war, books containing radio scripts were becoming more common. Once paper shortage is no longer a publishing obstacle they should multiply. It will also help the establishment and recognition of radio as literature when phonograph-recording companies resume the issue of radio programs in album form.

It is true, of course, that some radio scripts are repeated a number of times. It turns out upon analysis that many of these repeats are adaptations to radio of works famous in the first instance as stage plays or novels. It is their original fame or the fame of the original author that earns them repeat performances. This practice is essentially a peculiarity of the radio program market's zest for names, and has little bearing upon the prestige of radio writing as such.

Another charge frequently heard is that the arbitrary limit of radio drama, twenty-six minutes and thirty seconds, crowds the author and prevents self-expression. Some authors charge that they cannot say anything they want to say in twenty-six minutes and thirty seconds, just as some poets assert that they cannot be contained in the sonnet form with its rigid fourteen-line form.

This is as it may be. One cannot deny that the conditions of radio force the exercise of brevity upon writers. To some this may be an intolerable limitation. It is a limitation that does not limit many others.

Writers complain on occasion that when novels and stage plays are cut down to radio length, precious dialogue and detail are thrown away. The tendency is to blame this upon the rigid time allotments of commercial radio, and yet the same complaint is heard in England where those who run radio can assign as much or as little time to a given broadcast as is, in their artistic judgment, necessary. When Somerset Maugham's stage play *Sheppey* was cut for radio the British radio critic Peter Burbeck wrote:

You will remember that *Sheppey* is about a barber's assistant who wins several thousand pounds in a sweepstake and then, instead of enriching himself and his dependents, starts to give the money away to petty thieves, women of the streets and other citizens of that sort because it comes to him "like a great white light" that that is what he ought to do with it. His family call in a doctor, who contemplates getting *Sheppey* certified. "It's quite obvious," says the doctor, "that a sane man is not going to give all his money to the poor. A sane man makes money from the poor." This doctor also utters the opinion that loving one's fellow men is not a healthy sign and that "with rational education of the young, philanthropy could be entirely stamped out of this country."

The complaint of critic Peter Burbeck is that these and other lines are essential to the story of *Sheppey*—yet they were omitted from the BBC radio version.

George Bernard Shaw would permit absolutely no tampering with or condensation of his text, so when the BBC did his *Arms and the Man* the full stage play was broadcast uncut. Fortunately the play divided naturally by acts so BBC handled it that way. At the end of Act I *Arms and the Man* came to a halt, a program of phonograph recordings followed, and it was announced that those who wished to hear Act II could tune in four days later. During

1942 a two-and-a-half hour drama was broadcast in London. It was interrupted in the middle by a speech from Prime Minister Winston Churchill, after which the play resumed.

The demand in radio writing is for sheer, dependable, technically competent craftsmanship. The kind of work radio asks of authors is hard work, work produced to style and to deadline. Radio writing is the opposite to literary dilettantism. It is starkly professional in all its implications. Of the regular routine at networks it has been well said that staff writers are all kinds of writers and staff writing is all kinds of writing. Whether staff-written or free-lance-written, the typical radio script is prized for simple practicality first of all. Does it get going fast, does it grip, does it maintain suspense, is it direct, convincing, untroublesome to actors and director alike?

It is often pointed out that too many radio scripts are narrowly concentrated upon the eternal reasking of two literary questions: One, who got the girl? Two, who killed the guy?

The critical point here is that too often the radio writer or radio producer never has anything fresh or refreshing to say about boy-meets-girl or detective-solves-crime. Actually sex and homicide are pretty fundamental in all drama, and their appeal as subject matter cannot be questioned. What can be questioned is the skill of the artist. It is no crime in itself that a story is artificial. Elmer Davis long ago said that the difference between good art and bad art is that in good art artificiality is plausible and pleasing.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCERNING DAYTIME SERIALS

PERHAPS you fancied it was a secret between you and your boss (or client) that you were looking for a radio daytime serial. That was yesterday. Today your outer office is occupied by two natty young men with transcriptions and three snappy young women with an air of knowing. They have arrived, unsummoned save by the grapevine. They are free-lance makers or merchants of five-a-week quarter-hour strip serials, a special kind of literature and a special kind of radio problem. Their purpose today is to convince you, but fast, that your search has, with their appearance, been triumphantly concluded.

You quickly learn, if you didn't know before, that buying a daytime serial is a peculiarly puzzling, or puzzlingly peculiar, sort of business. There is the usual amount of double talk of the kind hallowed between buyer and seller in all business. But there is much more than that since a serial is not merchandise that can be graded or space that can be measured or time that can be apportioned, but a sum of intangibles called plot and dialogue and know-how. About such matters there can be legitimate division of opinion. There can also be a considerable amount of razzle-dazzle.

Undoubtedly the impressions of any given buyer are highly personalized and the remarks here set forth should be read in that frame of reference—they are personal reactions. Nor is any inference intended that writers are never put upon in their turn. The writer has cause to grumble, too. The buyer can be exasperatingly enigmatic and noncommittal. He is apt to be demanding and yet vague, critical but not always very helpful. We here present not the writer's side, but the businessman's.

It seems only fair to admit at the outset that any buyer (acting for his client or boss as the case may be) must proceed in some measure upon faith in the author and his or her record of past performance. The buyer (and his principals) cannot fail to be impressed by literary reputation and trade credits just as, reversely, the seller is conditioned by what he knows or thinks he knows about the buyer. Nevertheless radio authors, and business agents for them, tend to overdo their demands to be taken blindly on faith. They ask a vote of confidence, ironclad and in legal form, on an often extremely meager advance sampling of what the buyer is going to get for his money.

The so-called audition presentation for a daytime serial is frequently neither typical of what the buyer can reasonably expect in finished daily episodes week after week, nor even a true sample of the author's occasional literary best. It is way beyond his own outside limits of skill in plotting, construction, dialogue. In short, the presentation is loaded. It is full of benzedrine. It shimmers with a wholly improbable brilliance. The dialogue for the nonce is on a par with Somerset Maugham's. Carefully selected interpolated scenes are not radio scenes at all but hopped-up small classics of sharply crescendo climaxes out of, and indeed quite without, structural context. And meanwhile the running commentary embodying these vignettes of seat-edge suspense is as exciting as Ted Husing at a prize fight. Reading such a presentation or hearing it on wax, the buyer will rightly decide that here is exactly the kind of tense and beguiling writing that he wants. The question he should immediately ask himself is whether he shall ever again in everyday life meet up with these literary qualities he so much admires in the presentation.

The razzle-dazzle of the sell is, of course, engagingly plausible. Indeed the buyer is almost maneuvered into the position of seeming less than sportsmanly, reasonable or respectful of genius if he dares to wonder out loud whether the author can satisfactorily fill in the parts of the prospective story which are so generously omitted

from the glittering presentation. Many a would-be serial writer, or his agent, manifests an interest only in describing, not in exhibiting, what the property up for sale will be like.

My own defense against razzle-dazzle has been to request of authors, and/or their agents, three ordinary, typical, unneeded, run-of-mill scripts. Usually I suggest that Episodes 1, 47 and 103 be prepared. The reasoning behind these designations is as follows:

Episode 1: This is an important test. In a few firm, professionalism-revealing strokes the author must set the central scene and characters, get the story moving fast.

Episode 47: This is long enough into the future to serve as a plot-development test.

Episode 103: At this point the author should have arrived somewhere, if he is ever going to, and the buyer naturally likes to have a feeling of confidence that the serial is to go forward and not stand still.

However misleading the razzle-dazzle type of presentation may be, there is something perhaps even worse, viz., the radio writer who, eschewing all pretense, leeringly implies that of course he knows that a serial is nothing but hokum and not to be taken seriously by either buyer or seller. This sort of chap informs you to your face that he is a hack, that he is sloppy, offhand and contemptuous. He seeks to form a partnership of indifference with you. Such an approach is hardly flattering to the intelligence or sincerity of the buyer. It is all-revealing of the attitude of the writer.

Serials average roughly \$1,400 to \$2,000 per week in talent costs. Fees to writers run from \$150 to \$350, some few getting substantially higher incomes.

It seems essential that the writer of a serial shall have a lively and alert mind, and that he shall not accept mediocrity as a matter of course. It is always important whether the author has something to say. This certainly does not mean whether he has an urge

to propagandize or advance his own particular pet causes. "Something to say" means something to say about human beings, their minds and hearts, their emotional clashes. If an author fails to observe life and to enrich his own understandings, if instead he relies upon an endless reworking of stereotypes in character and stock situations in plot, his serial is sure to go stale. It will be the sort of show that is, office-wise, always in and seldom out of trouble.

None of the foregoing comment should be construed as a denial of levels of skill even among hacks. Professional experience and know-how count even where artistic distinction plays little part. The really exasperating serial writer is the faker who forever talks a good game, who stalls and pads and milks scenes and sequences. As the devil can quote Scripture for his own ends, so can such a faking writer quote the admitted story traits of the daytime serial form as an alibi for his own careless work. For example, it is perfectly legitimate in a serial to reiterate essential plot detail two or three times, but to the hack this fact converts into a ready-made excuse for shying away again and again from the next piece of action. As for his tepid and tired dialogue, the faker will argue that this is simple or true to life and therefore ideal. In saying this he tends to repudiate or belittle his status as a dramatist.

One agrees, of course, that dialogue should be natural and easy, never florid or self-conscious, and that good dialogue is the all-in-all of radio characterization. As they talk, so are they. The listener cannot see them, he can only imagine them. The serial is not photography but magic—not reporting but drama.

All serials are conditioned by their sharing of the daily quarter-hour episode form, but apart from this physical circumstance they may, and do, differ widely in type, ranging from the fast-moving, bang-bang melodrama to relatively urbane and sophisticated romantic comedy. Plots may be as lurid as page one or as taffy-flavored as a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer shopgirl and millionaire saga. Theft, conspiracy, physical danger, blackmail, mistaken identity, false accusation—these plot devices are present in serials. So, too, is

the family homestead, the ubiquitous mortgage and kitchen shoptalk aplenty. The atmosphere is likely to be chummy, the focus upon small clusters of persons rather than upon vast canvases of humanity. But the serials are not merely folksy, not exclusively small town. They are also exotic, presenting glamorous adventures in East Africa, the Chilean Andes and Shubert Alley. In consequence of these many levels of storytelling, a serial writer who may have an excellent record and an imposing array of professional credits can still be the wrong selection for a given program. However simple this truism may seem when pointed out in cold type, it is by no means universally recognized or observed.

Storytelling in serial form is, of course, as old as literature itself. Indeed it may be considered the very beginning of literature. Pearl Buck tells us of village tale spinners in China who worked suspense up to a high pitch of excitement and then passed the hat for financial inducement to continue. Homer, Scheherazade, the wandering minstrels of Europe's Middle Ages all have expressed an endearing propensity for going on and on indefinitely because humanity has always eagerly demanded, "And then what happened?" Once radio was invented, we may now state (in the brilliant white light of hindsight) that "Ma Perkins" and "Life Can Be Beautiful" were practically inevitable. Not that the radio daytime serial follows a well-marked literary path. To the contrary, its technical problems are peculiarly its own. Starting from scratch about 1930, the serials have constantly changed and developed. They continue to change.

Generally speaking, it is still true that the radio serials need to escape two things: (a) their low budgets and (b) the inferiority complex induced in many serial makers by the peppering of condescension and wisecracks from and among the intelligentsia in recent years. No matter that many of the charges were whimsical and exaggerated or that much of the job-lot psychological data was, scientifically speaking, nonsensical. Nobody likes to be accused of complicating the middle age of nervous women, as alleged by one

doctor who charged that because of listening to serials his patients were developing rising blood pressure, vasomotor instability, profuse perspiration, nightmares, tachycardia and gastrointestinal disturbances.

The main conditioning factor among serial authors, however, is not inferiority feelings but fatigue. There are five fifteen-minute broadcasts to be planned and written for this week, another five for next week, and so on until in a year's time the ghastly total amounts to two hundred and sixty separate chapters. Only an experienced craftsman of disciplined character, great technical resource and downright stamina can go the long route.

Although new techniques in research may ultimately be useful, it is still largely cold judgment that must guide the radio impresario. He cannot see the serial whole since it exists only in fragments of promise. Three-quarters of the prospective characters are no more than a descriptive paragraph each in the story outline. The serial has no middle and ending like a stage play, just a beginning. Rousing curtains and crescendo effects of the kind so highly prized in the theater have little significance in a medium which must always ask the devastating question, "And then what happens?"

This writer once witnessed an extremely corny bit of radio drama that was being presented with the full cast in formal evening attire. The leading man and the villain could hardly snarl at each other for choking on their high, stiff, white collars while the ladies who fluttered about the microphone were obliged to worry about their trains and Saturday night girdles as well as their parts. One actress especially reeked of chic. Her chiffon kerchief, four feet long and completely useless, dangled from a diamond bracelet and as she slithered across stage to the mike she was definitely way ahead of *Vogue*. She held her script tightly in one hand and waited. Finally on a cue from the director she opened her mouth and emitted to stop watch one nicely calculated, slightly crescendo, clear, solo, pre-AFRA shriek. Whereupon she turned and lavishly returned

to her chair, there to remain for the remainder of the broadcast.

This picture of studio pomp contrasts with the simple down-to-cases mood at the average daytime serial. First of all there isn't any audience. Nor are there any photographers around. The leading lady may, if she choose, work in a sweater and skirt and bobby socks.

When one serial with a 9:45 A.M. broadcast time announced to its cast that rehearsals would begin daily at 7:45 A.M. the actors muttered, and have ever since, that this was a chill and ghoulish time at which to practice a warm and sensitive art like acting. Nothing but lucre persuaded them, then or since, to endure such an aesthetically revolting ordeal.

Not only the actors but the director is forever muttering. He arrives at the studio in a state of resemblance to a shaggy buffalo, especially on Monday mornings. Business is obviously interfering with fun and he is not long in his hammock on many a morning in stifling summer and bitter winter when the summons to early morning dramatics clatters offensively in his ears.

It may be thought that a rehearsal launched in such a gruesome atmosphere of grumbling, misanthropy and self-pity is not likely to produce a high level of artistry. But they do finally get down to serious work after the preliminary period of yawning, stretching, scratching, voice clearing, nose blowing and general stalling. They cannot long postpone the job at hand or forget that they face a rendezvous with 3,000,000 palpitating American housewives.

First, the director gathers his flock around a seventy-two-inch oblong table and has a rough read through of the parts. Usually there are five or six actors for any one episode. (Serials usually are budgeted at twenty-five actors per week.) Gathered around the table, some of them wearing spectacles, the troupe could pass for a bunch of Phi Beta Kappas boning in the college library. There isn't a hint of glamour. It's a job. Moreover, since serials may stay on the air nine and ten years, it may also turn out to be a career.

High on one wall of the studio is the infallible electrically regu-



*Courtesy of Walter Seigal, Columbia Broadcasting System*  
Trade journals in the radio field



*Courtesy of WOV New York*

Italian grocery with radio on counter. Scene on lower East Side,  
New York

lated clock, sacred icon of every broadcasting chapel the world over. The room itself is medium-sized. There is a studio organ in one corner. The sound-effects apparatus is parked to one side. Collapsible aluminum chairs are scattered about. In center-studio directly before the control booth is the main microphone. Dull-shine linoleum covers the floor. The walls are faintly pock-marked as part of the acoustical treatment. Indirect lighting plays upon shy grays, muddy whites, disappearing blues. The entire *décor* achieves a calculated neutrality so that the place never intrudes upon the event. It is primarily a colorless cavern, largely characterless, windowless save for the plate-glass barrier between the cast and the production trio of director, assistant director and engineer. There is a vague tendency to claustrophobia and an odd feeling of being sealed off from the near-by New York side street even while united with millions of American parlors by the strange intimacy of the hookup.

Of these environmental details the band of actors and program technicians take little notice. The surroundings are too familiar and besides a two-hour rehearsal (more or less) looms before them. Nor do they remind themselves at this moment that they are engaged in a novel and esoteric new medium of mass entertainment and education.

The director drills his players.

“No, read that line more pointedly. It is essential to the plot.”

“That’s not important. Throw it away.” A throw-away is a speech delivered without emphasis.

“Darling—” to one actress—“you’re swallowing your ‘ing’ on the word receiving.”

Essential equipment for a radio actor in rehearsal is a pencil for he or she is likely to be crossing out and writing in quite a lot at the command of the director. The actors also underscore words or syllables or speeches to remember to accent or approach them in a certain way.

“On page eight,” the director orders, “take that first speech,

Gert, drop all but the first sentence then blend it into the second sentence of your third speech below. We'll eliminate all the rest. It'll play smoother that way."

The excess verbiage thus cut out of the text falls to the floor, figuratively, like neck fuzz at the barber shop.

Studio-wise actors are usually keen in detecting verbal faults in a script, lumpy phrasing, sticky words, intrusions of the sibilant "s" sound that hisses on the air. However, even the sharpest ear among the actors is sometimes deaf to certain verbal idiosyncrasies in pronunciation or word rhythm.

One of the actresses enunciates, "I tell you" to sound "I teh you." Another's "Wouldn't you know?" invariably comes out a habitual "Wooden ya know?" Such words as tissue, oxygen, desirable, secretive, ridiculous, inimitable get tangled in various tonsils.

Authors of serials strive of course to avoid tongue twisters or complication of statement since clarity is the first law of radio communication. But sometimes arrangements of words that read clearly and simply on paper develop unexpected and unpredictable complexities when read aloud as part of dramatic dialogue.

One thing is pretty certain in the broadcasting studio: the director is going to be proffered an abundance of unsolicited artistic counsel. Although the engineer is assigned, plausibly, to engineering he gives his intellectual all to the director, commenting freely on nearly everything—dialogue, pace, pronunciation, plot consistency, character shadings and the dress the leading lady is wearing. The assistant director also fires suggestions in between going crazy trying to balance the contradictory findings of the stop watch. He is the vice-president in charge of seeing that the program ends "on the nose."

The workaday atmosphere at a serial may suddenly alter if the author enters the studio. Usually he or she is discreetly absent but on occasional visits it is possible to detect an undercurrent of tension between author and director. Issues of artistic egotism and professional prestige are involved between the creator of a serial

and the interpreter of the text. The author may be saying, "Is this guy going to maul my beautiful drama of heart's blood?" while the director is speculating privately, "Will this gal agonize if I cut those three speeches on page seven?"

The director is and must be the boss in the studio but even as he acts as boss (or butcher!) he realizes he is himself being judged for taste and *simpatico*.

After he has drilled his actors the director devotes his attention for a little while to the sound-effects technician and the organist. They must understand what he wants of them. What he wants, generally speaking, is subtle, imperceptible co-operation, not solos. It used to be, but no more, that sound effects and music would fight with the spoken word for the attention of the listener. Today a director compliments his sound-effects technician when he says, "Ask Bill for a mooing cow and he gives you a mooing cow—not a charging bull." Or when he reports of his organist, "With Max you get what you ask for and he doesn't add twenty seconds of his own original unpublished gavotte."

By 9:42 the director has his show organized. The players are well rehearsed, the technicians all know their chores. The final dress rehearsal is over and everybody has had a last five minutes for a cigarette before the actual broadcast. The final minutes before air are ticking away. An illuminated sign lights up reading STAND BY. The split-second arm moves steadily to the exact moment of rendezvous. The sign changes to ON THE AIR and the director in his fish bowl throws his forefinger at the network announcer, the first voice to be heard.

Now unfolds Episode 473. The actors hold their scripts firmly in one hand while gesticulating with the other. They move in and out of the immediate zone of the microphone. They raise and lower their pitch, laugh on cue, weep to order, scream by stopwatch, mill about on the periphery of the scene, pretending to be a crowd of people. Or they change their voice, age, cultural inflection for a double. They act with their shoulders, their forward

leg, their free hand, their larynx, the muscles of their face and the one eye they can spare from watching script and director.

The sound-effects man is tensed to open a door. He holds it for a few seconds, shuts it on a hand signal from the booth. Whether it's a heavy door, a light door, a screen porch door is specified in the script.

The organist is mounted upon his bench wearing earphones and a cigar, the earphones being regulation equipment. Only the theme song with which he opens and closes the show exists in manuscript. The rest of the time he improvises, throwing out *musical* punctuation, asterisks, exclamation points. A scene is ended. He comes in with appropriate mood music. Two actors go and sit down, two others come in for the next scene. The announcer reads the narration which give the listeners the necessary explanation to tie the two scenes together.

In the control room the assistant director looks up from the stop watch to report, "You've picked up forty-five seconds." This means that the show is playing fast, that it may be short at the end. The engineer is intent upon his engineering, maintaining balance, watching voice levels since actors do not always parallel in broadcast their routine in rehearsal. A margin for their tension, nerves, unconscious variations in projection of personality must be accommodated.

Is the episode holding the interest of its three million listeners?

The assistant director is now registering anxiety. He is more strident this time as he cries out in the control room, "we're a minute and twelve seconds ahead of time." His tone demands that the director not remain unvexed. The latter is following the dramatic text, attending to the words and their meaning, the performances of the several players. His thoughts race ahead to the next sound effect or music cue or board fade. Five voices are crowded near the mike at the moment. One breaks and wheels out of the arc. Another follows, then a third slips free. A dialogue between the heroine and the leading man now ensues.

While preoccupied with this bombardment of words, music, telephone dial tones, opening and closing of doors, mood, pace and dramatic clash the director turns and, as if announcing a decision just sent up from his own subconsciousness, he says, "Max will have to stretch his music bridges."

The organist becomes Mr. Fix-It.

Through the plate-glass barrier the director signals in digital semaphore, "Make your next music bridge a long one." The man in the cigar and earphones nods his understanding.

The director now bunches his two sets of fingers and pulls them apart repeatedly. To the two leads at the mike this means, "Stretch it, kids." They slow down, begin talking with longer pauses. They put in some hems and haws.

Three minutes go by. Now the assistant director looks up happily from his stop watch and pad of figures.

"We're back on the nose," he trumpets.

The director relaxes, the engineer relaxes. When the information is signaled to the floor, everybody relaxes. The crisis is under control.

The end is near now. The dramatic tempo quickens, there is a sharp note of insistence in the voices. The plot is rising to one of its periodic peaks. Today's episode is up-curving to a high plateau of excitement and suspense. The heroine is having a showdown with her spoiled, strong-willed father. Verbal barbs fly between them. She delivers one final speech, taut with emotion. What will he say? What will her father do?

The announcer steps in, the organist brings up the theme song, and we hear once more, "Be sure to tune in again tomorrow."

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## CHAPTER XX

### COMEDY IS A SERIOUS BUSINESS

ALL other issues and all other activities of the radio business are of a lesser importance in the final reckoning than the greater question of securing and maintaining high program-popularity ratings, for therein resides the one sure guarantee of financial success. When people are induced to listen by the tens of millions, when they are educated to a habit of return and regular listening, then there has been brought into being a mass of attentive consumers which spells advertising circulation that national distributors of trade-mark goods cannot pass by. What then are the choices, as regards radio programs, likely to build high popularity ratings? Even a quick glance at the biweekly reports makes it apparent that, with occasional exceptions, comedy programs consistently dominate.

Here begins grief. For comedy is expensive and comedians are few and unpredictable. This was one of the first lessons learned in big-time radio. Another primary lesson was that a full hour program is not just twice as hard to formulate as a half-hour program. The hazards rise geometrically. For this reason—and because of time costs—the half-hour has become in latter years the standard length for a nighttime entertainment just as fifteen minutes across the board (viz., five a week) is the standard length of the daytime serial.

During the war years Douglas Coulter of CBS called the need for new comedy programs radio's most acute postwar problem. "If," he remarked, "the Army and the Navy do not now contain within their enrollments the future comics, then where, oh where, are they?" Coulter, with most executives concerned with programs, recognized the unhealthy dependence of the industry and radio's

circulation story upon a comparatively small number of comedians, some of whom would presently be getting well along in years.

Because of the great demand for and the greater scarcity of comedy talent of all kinds, not only the comedian as an entertainer but comedy writers, comedy constructionists, comedy directors—all of them a breed apart from ordinary radio-program talent—find their compensation set by the market and set very high indeed. The persons or the combinations of persons who can give radio advertisers twenty-rating and better circulation can, without further quibble, command five and six-figure incomes. Such circulation seems always to be a good bargain.

Naturally there is a continuing discussion in the radio trade and among radio-program technicians as to what constitutes successful radio comedy. There is, it may be revealed, very little unanimity. There is also, in consequence of doubt and divided counsel, a pronounced tendency to imitate success. That is to say, if one program has made the grade, then its component parts are studied, analyzed, interpreted and catalogued, and other programs appear in substantial similarity. This is often a regrettable result for it may happen that the public will like Major Bowes's "Amateur Hour" but not half a dozen similar programs. Again and again the comedians sound alike. On more than a few occasions, especially Sundays or Tuesdays, the big comedy nights, the same joke or jokes have been repeated in slight variation on three or four programs in sequence.

Having discovered a workable and a successful formula neither comedian nor advertising agency nor sponsor cares to quibble with his own success. Programs often become slavishly devoted to their own first and set ways. This presents a paradox—how to be forever fresh yet always essentially the same. It can be done. It is done. But it costs in dollars and in stomach ulcers.

One ought to be cautious in generalizations in the field of comedy, for the unpredictables of personality, situation, stooge appeal, catchphrases and so on constitute a gigantic question mark. The

experts are constantly trying, of course, to evoke the very effects they sometimes obtain. Still they fail as often as they succeed and their failures often surprise them as much as their successes. Meantime the money is poured in with a lavish hand and necessarily so, for comedy shows are seldom if ever successfully produced in terms of mass circulation on a skimpy budget. Comedy cannot be ordinary or fair or mild if the big ratings are in view. It must be socko, colossal, high-powered, boff, full of yaks!

There are of course certain widely accepted rules in comedy show designing. It is now generally taken for granted that the comedian should be sympathetic. He will not be truly popular with the American people if he is unkind, if he crushes other people, if his retorts are clever rather than human. Again and again know-it-alls from Broadway who have a long record of success in vaudeville and night clubs have failed in radio because they could not or would not modify their oversophisticated style, their self-important flippancies.

It is possible to trace certain arresting clues to popularity among the top-rating comedy shows but no comment by itself suffices as an explanation. Often the missing factor in analysis of a program is the eight or nine or more years it's been on the air developing its own unique style and its own special audience of loyal fans. To say, "They do it this way, and therefore they succeed," is unrealistic because it's drastically oversimplified. It counts importantly in comedy program success whether the show preceding and the show following are also popular with the public. It counts, too, what programs oppose the show at the same time period on other networks.

One notes that many of the most beloved comedy shows are good-naturedly (never viciously) concerned with the deflation of human braggadocio. Note "Fibber McGee and Molly," Edgar Bergen-Charlie McCarthy, Bob Hope, Jack Benny, "The Great Gildersleeve." Then there is the *enfant terrible* formula as exemplified by Fannie Brice's "Baby Snooks," by "The Aldrich Family"

and by Red Skelton. In short it would appear that American radio fans seem to be profoundly amused by the Troublesomely imaginative adult and the juvenile equivalent, or brat.

The outside world's concept of the boastful Yankee originated, no doubt, with boastful Yankees. And the concept persists, at a guess, because the type persists. But it is usually misunderstood because outside observers lack the knowledge of American idiom, American whimsicality, American fondness for artistic hyperbole, and American capacity for self-satire without which brag cannot be accurately evaluated. Bragging is more than an American trait; it is a conspicuous strain of American humor.

The standout successes among American comedy shows are marked by dynamic pace and vigor. In this respect they have the quality of vaudeville or farce. And yet their significance probably lies in the fact that they are basically comedies of manners, which hold up mirrors to the masses in which they may recognize and laugh at the more rabid exponents of rugged individualism. The net residual effect of these broadcasts week after week and year after year is perhaps mellowing.

It must be remembered that large sections of the United States are still remote, lonely, cut off from or unable to afford ordinary cultural influences, literature, music and traveling entertainment. In such areas radio has operated as a great educative force. This is not to claim that the swamps of ignorance have been cleared away, for they have not been, but the urbanity and humor of radio seem to be helping to develop a healthy critical faculty. This assertion may seem doubtful to Britishers fed only on occasional journalistic reports concerning guitar-playing governors and other quaint provincial statesmen, but it is worth remarking that demagogues do find radio a cruel public test of their mentality and sincerity. One spectacular nonentity who skyrocketed as a crank group spokesman some years ago literally destroyed himself by a single network radio appearance which removed all remaining doubts that he was a complete boob.

But this is the salient fact: Radio brings the American people together in a common sharing of experience and discussion, laughter and drama never previously possible in a country that is also a continent with a four-hour time differential from coast to coast, with winter prevailing in some sections while it is summer elsewhere and with widely varying racial strains. It is a social reality of the utmost seriousness that tens of millions of Americans guffaw simultaneously at the same jokes and come to understand the same idiosyncrasies of American personality of which this element of brag is not the least self-revealing.

American brag in the beginning was undoubtedly a form of intellectual intoxication produced in pioneers and frontiersmen, many of them lusty fellows to start with. Even the dour Massachusetts Puritans who advocated the constant mortification of proud flesh were themselves guilty of bragging that they alone were holy enough for paradise. In the wilderness men who had fled first from authoritarian Europe and later from the Europeanized Eastern seaboard states boasted *ad nauseam* that they were free men, and did anybody in the house want to dispute it? The riotous drinking habits of the frontier inflamed the habit of swagger. Moreover the competitive spirit among the early settlers revolved around personal tests of skill, strength, cunning or liquid capacity and became hotly partisan issues. A man's prestige was measured by the arts of riding, shooting, roping, cutting down timber, plowing up fields, husking maize, racing canoes. The folklore of supermen thus created has continued to influence Americans and American humor down to the present day.

Americans not only tell fabulous stories but they laugh at one another for this weakness. Of course all fishermen definitely recognize one another as liars. (This condition is also not unknown in Great Britain.) The decline of our predominantly agricultural economy has radically altered many old habits but nevertheless it is still a distinguishing peculiarity among Yanks from different rural districts to square off, usually with a twinkling eye, for a con-

test in claims and counterclaims. A radio version of this old Yankee custom takes place menacingly when Jack Benny visits the program of his crisp and formidable fellow comedian, Fred Allen. The rapiers of wit are always aimed at puncturing the other fellow's brag.

In the heady environment of the American West's heyday the big talk of minor prophets found plausibility in the shadow of big deeds by authentic giants. Surrounded by the fairly constant visible example of the accomplishment of the improbable, Wee Willies were always tempted to promise the impossible. The country was free, the tide was rolling high. Every man was a stranger who might be a genius with cards, firearms, calf brands or just words. Ne'er-do-wells pursuing a policy of bluff sometimes found their fate in a bullet or a rope but sometimes they found fame and fortune. In such circumstances and among such men brag was as fluid as chewing tobacco. It created a style, a manner, a habit, an attitude, but above all a humor.

The brag legend was usually two-sided. The outside world has failed to appreciate this important distinction. Whether in folklore, fiction, film or wireless diversion brag has not always carried the day; sometimes it has limped home. Very often the frontier Odyssey alternated between the extremes of fortune and misfortune. But braggarts usually retain a certain lovable. They were seldom mean-spirited. Indeed the braggart was usually promptly recognized for what he was, a man with the gift of gab. He was not, in a world of strangers, dangerous like the taciturn fellows with cold eyes and quick fingers. In saloon society the braggart made life more colorful without ruining the evening with a funeral.

Undoubtedly this Yankee custom of playing with words, of using language in a sense understood only locally, is baffling, not to say inscrutable, to the outside world. The populations of Britain, Northern Ireland, New Zealand and Australia were to discover that many American soldiers were quiet, modest and polite. Obviously Hollywood had prepared them to expect battalions composed

of brash young Mickey Rooneys commanded by cocky quick-to-oh-yeah Jimmy Cagneys. This contrast between what Yankees seem to be and actually are often runs through our politics to the confusion, again, of the outside world. Hearing of prohibition the foreigner supposes for a time that Americans have stopped drinking. Hearing of neutrality legislation he supposes that Americans will be neutral. Hearing of the re-election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, he supposes Senator Wheeler has been repudiated.

The very title of the radio program, "Fibber McGee and Molly," suggests something of the tongue-in-cheek quality in American brag which often escapes the outside world. "Fibber" is of course a euphemism for one who enriches anecdotes from the resources of his own imagination. The "Fibber" is a good-natured but flamboyant Yankee, whose wife, Molly, knows him very well indeed. She is usually tolerant of his high-soaring rhetoric and his self-favoring interpretations of his own exploits. But when "Fibber" occasionally oversteps or waxes too flippant Molly will dryly rap, "'T ain't funny, McGee." Since radio-popularized catch phrases often pass into the daily conversation of American school children (and adults) one esoteric method of conveying a lack of amusement or of agreement in the United States is to flip, "'T ain't funny, McGee." The man's name may, of course, be Jones or Smith or Kabrosky.

It took nearly ten years of slow upbuilding for "Fibber McGee and Molly" to achieve their present peak of popularity with the American radio public. All this time the pair (they are Mr. and Mrs. Jim Jordan in private life) has sold wax polish for homes and motor cars. They were much appreciated by the United States Government for their clever and cheerful aid in putting over with the masses various wartime campaigns having to do with salvaging, saving and sharing on the home front.

The ventriloquial dummy, Charlie McCarthy, is completely fresh, impudent and know-it-all, constantly bragging. His alter ego (and proprietor) has an unending struggle to tame the dummy's

stupendous self-esteem. The master, Edgar Bergen, is one of the great comedy talents of this generation but it is significant that the rich vein which he cleverly works is the vein of braggadocio. Tens of millions of Americans listen to the cross fire between him and the dummy every week.

Bob Hope of course is the beau ideal of a conceited young man who fancies himself devastating to the opposite sex. The comedy formula of Jack Benny is perhaps more subtle. Benny is a bit of a poseur, pretending to knowledge or social standing that is not his. Invariably he is exposed as a fake. Benny is a fool but a lovable fool, the constant victim of his own human idiosyncracies, a man who aspires to a deference his colleagues and the world withhold from him. When he thinks he is being utterly charming his wife will instruct him "Fix your toupee, Jack—it slipped."

The visitor from across the Pond is often convinced upon arrival in the United States that radio advertising itself is simply another form of American brag—this time by corporations instead of individuals. But on closer examination the visitor is apt to be puzzled by a seeming contradiction in American reactions to the commercial announcements which are mixed in with entertainment, education, music and news. These sales messages are usually spoken over the air by highly paid, highly stylized announcers, bubbly voiced creatures who obviously influence millions of Americans in their daily marketing. And yet the mannerisms and affectations of these influential announcers are mimicked and mocked all over the United States. Indeed the more "enlightened" advertisers permit and encourage comedians to spoof the salesman-braggart. They understand the strain of whimsy in Yankees which makes them enjoy standing aside and chuckling over the work habits and the sheer technique of those who survive and thrive by brag.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### THE *ENTENTE CORDIALE*

THE United States has been, for better or worse, an economy fertilized by invention and tilled by salesmanship. These influences have been braided into the story of our transition from an agricultural to an industrial, from a debtor to a creditor nation. The Yankee inventor created gadgets, the Yankee peddler went on the road to sell them. Together they helped make America a land stocked with an abundance of goods. Even in the nineteenth century the American farmer, for all his isolation and provincialism, was well serviced, for the Yankee peddler, sometimes on foot with a pack on his back and sometimes in a wagon, penetrated into the remote country and knocked directly upon the farmhouse door. Some of the Yankee peddlers settled down and grew up with the teeming towns through which they passed. They or their offspring became the "merchant princes" celebrated in the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches epics.

In modern times the chain store has appeared and a great battle goes on incessantly between the unadvertised, chain-controlled "house" brands and the nationally advertised trade-marked products. The Yankee peddler is now a different sort of creature. Incessant ballyhoo is a weapon in a complicated situation where everybody is selling everything and where department stores, variety stores, mail-order stores, supermarkets and chains of all sorts fight for consumers.

John Allen Murphy in an article in *Advertising and Selling Magazine* described one big American city where some curious trade paradoxes existed. A furniture store sold the greatest number of radios, a department store the greatest volume of furniture. Electrical appliances were most actively retailed not in an electrical-

appliance shop but in, first, a jeweler's and, second, a music store. The leading sporting goods merchant was a hardware dealer, Sears Roebuck handled more bathtubs than any plumber, a novelty shop's restaurant was second only to the biggest hotel in the number of meals catered daily.

All this emphasizes the familiar. Anybody with eyes may verify the facts for himself. The intensifying tempo of American salesmanship has brought us into an era of confused business boundaries. We are both hustling and topsy-turvy. To repeat—"Everybody is selling everything." The greater the competition and the greater the rewards of successful domination of the markets the greater the resort to advertising.

Although not recognized as such at the time an affinity between salesmanship and the entertainment arts was developing as early as the 1870's in the now-famous "medicine shows." These represented a peculiarly flavorsome bit of native enterprise in the days before medical societies insisted that doctors should have diplomas and that medicines should consist of something more than water flavored with root extract and colored with caramel. The medicine shows, like the Yankee peddler, traveled about the country in horse-drawn wagons. They paused at any convenient courthouse square, vacant lot or crossroads to present their free show. With a complement of entertainers, men and women who sang and played the banjo and cracked jokes, the audience was lulled into a receptive mood. Then came the "doctor," a man of lush personality and rich powers of articulation. He was the messenger of glad tidings, the man who had what was good for what ailed you. Gout or dandruff, epilepsy or obesity were cured out of the same bottle.

One favorite come-on was a rough soap sold to cure rheumatism. The soap helped lubricate a vigorous massage which stirred up the circulation and gave the sufferer a momentary illusion of relief. The pain, of course, returned as soon as the temporary effects of the massage passed. Presumably intelligent citizens, not just country yokels, were taken in by the blandishments of the "doctor" who

did not hesitate to urge people to consult him privately in the afternoons. (Performances were given at night by kerosene flares, sometimes under canvas, sometimes in the open air on a platform extending out from one of the wagons.) During "office hours" a line of hypochondriacs waited their turn to consult the visiting "doctor." When reputable physicians protested this unlicensed competition from uneducated and unconscionable quacks they found that the townspeople often sided with the traveling medicine show and against the local medico. The "doctor" cheered people up and his entertainers provided welcome respite from the monotony of village existence. Often these itinerant medicine shows provided absolutely the only entertainment available during the year.

The partnership of entertainment and salesmanship did not stop with the medicine shows. They were merely the more picturesque expression of a business association that was more and more apparent after the turn of the century. In the very first issue of the theatrical weekly, *Variety*, in early December of 1906 a news item reported circus clowns and acrobats finding employment during the Christmas holidays in Macy's and other department stores.

The businessman has advertised in and through the theater for decades. Recall the old commercial slides at the primitive cinema. "After the show stop at Joe's on Market and Main for delicious banana splits and other tempting concoctions." Recall the advertising posters on the olio curtain in the small-time vaudeville halls. "Take her out for a buggy ride. Finest equipment for rent at Snazy's Stables." Recall, too, the ubiquitous theater program with its heavy burden of paid announcements by furriers, jewelers, restaurants, saloons, cigarettes, automobiles and sporting life generally.

Radio was not the only catalytic agent in bringing the man of commerce and the man of divertissement together. Big corporations on their own began using professional talent when they opened a new branch plant or launched a new product. The clown

parade, the department-store circus, the utility company's cooking demonstration complete with orchestra, singers and skit players—all were omens of an affinity. Trolley companies in the 1890's were promoters of amusement parks and summer stock companies. Wherever the public gathered in great throngs the businessman made haste to advertise. Football games, baseball games, horse races, six-day bicycle contests, barn dances and college proms—all these public entertainments attracted business advertising.

In latter days the company party in a municipal auditorium seating 20,000 persons brought entire sales organizations together for corporate indoctrination and laughter. Esso Gasoline sent Guy Lombardo's orchestra into theaters, admission being by gasoline sales receipt. A trade-marked whisky offered taverns a complete floor show free in return for commercial mentions and a bar display. A Minneapolis food packer traveled a line of chorus girls in the small towns of Montana, Idaho and other mountain states in order to introduce a processed meat. The county and state fair, the crop festival, the rodeo all developed innumerable ties between the entertainer and the advertiser.

It was merely carrying on in a well-established tradition when big national advertisers presently sponsored broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York, Detroit, Kansas City, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles Symphonies, the World's Series, championship prize fights, the Pimlico Futurity and so on.

Merchants in the tiny town of Winamac, Indiana, started a free show in the window of the tinsmith's shop. It began as a lark for local amusement. Somebody rigged up a loudspeaker and the local amateur talent put on a high jinks on Saturday night. In no time at all the stunt had become a community promotion that was bringing scores of motorists into town to the consequent enrichment of local merchants who benefited when the free show broke up at a discreetly early hour and the curiosity seekers were in a mood to look around.

New meat markets, new automobile-display rooms, all sorts of

establishments catering to the public were disposed to make an event of their inaugural evening. Music, comedians, singers, spot-lights offset the stuffed-shirt speeches. The so-called "Hollywood opening" was by no means confined to Hollywood. It became a national custom.

The moral as regards radiobroadcasting is obvious. Radio represents the easiest, quickest, most readily accessible means for uniting the self-interest of the businessman with the self-interest of the showman. But radio exceeds in importance all previous alliances of this sort. On the plane of national advertising and big budget entertainments the talent goes way beyond the hired mummer class. Radio converts entertainers into celebrities than which only a few persons in Washington and Hollywood are greater. A trade brochure published on behalf of Kate Smith suggested the dimensions of radio fame. Her audience was calculated at 4,800,000 weekly in 1931 when she began, at 23,000,000 weekly in 1943. She was the only civilian to get the Red Cross Legion of Valor, this after she "launched and propelled her own campaign to raise \$4,000,000 for the Red Cross." In a twenty-one-hour stint throughout the CBS program schedule during one war-bond campaign she sold \$2,013,500 worth of bonds to ordinary Americans who telephoned the station after hearing her appeal over the air. "Kate Smith isn't a star—she's a constellation." She is "neither an Indian, nor an equestrienne, nor a mother, nor a wife. And yet she is an honorary member of the Winnebago tribe of Sioux. She is a Texas Ranger and she is an honorary life member of the Blue Star Mothers of America." Kate Smith receives about 3,000,000 fan letters a year.

The national networks and the national advertising agencies get along, on the whole, quite well. Each side has some cause to criticize the other but both have reasons of self-interest to find the means for a harmonious relationship. Their common stake in radio programs and radio circulation transcends quibbles over details and procedures. Nonetheless it is precisely the details

and procedures of showmanship, entertainment, taste and balanced programming which sometimes divide the networks, who most bother about the public interest, convenience and necessity, and some agencies among which are men of impatient reaction to restraint and limitation "on the way we spend our money." The networks have been forced on occasion flatly to reject proffered programs or quietly to ask certain advertisers to get off the air. "If it's bad for broadcasting it can't be good for advertising" is the slogan the networks preach but the parties responsible for a program which either overreaches in salesmanship or underaccomplishes in entertainment are seldom prepared for the confessional. They will on occasion stoutly deny the charges and will hotly resent what they term "network interference." The networks prefer the advertiser with an acknowledged flair for showmanship and a willingness to invest large sums of money in talent as against another advertiser who will pay the tariff for time but will skimp on talent. It would not be a warranted generality to state that the greater the program budget the more probable quality showmanship. Nonetheless the common sense is inescapable: The best talent is the highest-priced talent.

Until around 1932 the networks, NBC and CBS that is, since Mutual and American did not then exist, were in substantial control, as producing showmen, of a preponderant number of the advertiser-sponsored programs on their own schedules. Two economic factors operated to reverse this situation. First, advertising agencies, coming into radio somewhat belatedly and grudgingly, needed to justify their collection of commissions and to hold the program-planning function to themselves. Second, and related, the networks were equipped in neither man power nor know-how at that period to defend their ability to provide successful top-flight entertainments for any and all advertisers who were ready to go on the air providing only a suitable vehicle could be suggested.

Observe here the consequence of self-interest, the modifications in trade practice—and ultimately in social values—forced by com-

mercial competition and client dissatisfaction. The networks were unable to play universal genius to all prospective radio advertisers. They had to make room for advertising-agency showmanship. But in their turn the advertising agencies were not so gifted with unfailing brilliance that they could dare exclude the free-lance program builder. Not networks alone, not advertising agencies alone, not free-lance program builders alone determined and controlled the radio programs the American people heard. Often a star or comedian or writer-producer incorporated himself together with his assistants, stooges, orchestra and so on, and made a deal on a "package" basis for a flat all-inclusive price which left all essential operations with the package owner. There were complementary motivations beyond mere financial profit as when a star wanted to tie to him those colleagues for whom he felt a personal fondness. The relationships existing among possessors of creative talent are often of a Damon and Pythias character. The comedian in particular is devoted to his entourage of stooges who know his every whim and mood and humorous nuance, who rejoice with him, grieve with him, worry with him, hate the agency or the network or *Variety* with him. Not for such gregarious creatures are the curt business routines of offices. Gag writers and the funny man they feed and feed upon favor strange haunts and working hours.

The general public seldom or never knows about the package producer or the free-lance program builder. There is no special reason why they should. But behind the scenes these individuals and companies do a thriving trade in entertainment for the air: Transamerican, Henry Souvaine, Frederick Ziv, Ed Wolfe, James Saphier, William Morris, Lyons & Lyons, Music Corporation of America, Carl Wester, World Broadcasting, NBC Thesaurus, etc.

The seemingly inevitable logic of circumstance suggests an increasing return of the networks to their original task of producing programs, digging up new talent, experimentally breaking ground, carrying on the constant quest for new circulation values

which the advertising agencies should applaud but customarily will not and cannot undertake. If in time to come the network tends to resemble Hollywood film studios in their essential concern with entertainment, as such, it will be a fulfillment of predictions made years ago and of recent omens. This of course does not imply a retirement from radio-program production by the advertising agencies. Rather it implies a stronger trade position as program package makers for the networks. Networks may presently maintain tryout stations for new programs as a major league baseball club supports lesser leagues and teams to prepare players for the big time. Certainly there is considerable evidence that the future usefulness of networks will be conspicuously measured in program terms. This will be the maturity phase of the industry.

Meanwhile it is already apparent that the networks are stressing programs as never before. Under the presidency of Edgar Kobak, Mutual has moved to create a standard network program department, budgeted at the outset at around \$600,000 a year. This contrasts with a previous average of nothing since Mutual was for years serviced by programs created in Boston, Cleveland, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Kansas City and wherever Mutual affiliates of sufficient showmanship had local entertainments available for feeding to the network. In theory this Mutual plan was excellent since it tapped regional springs for authentic American song and entertainment. In practice the results were extremely uneven precisely because budget was lacking. Radio programs do not happen, of course; they must be "manufactured" and the tools and dies come high.

The American Broadcasting Company, since its independence under Edward Noble, owner of Life Savers, has struck out boldly in terms of program experimentation. Probably no network was as receptive and wide-open to package-program impresarios as was ABC at this period. Literally scores of new programs bobbed up on the network, first under the vice-presidency of Hubbell Robin-

son and thereafter under Adrian Samish. The significance here lies in the stress upon programs. Programs were clearly recognized by ABC as open sesame to time sales.

The gradual return to more normal conditions in the country prompted management to take artistic inventory. The war had interrupted scouting activities. To discover a new comedian or singer any time after Pearl Harbor was immediately to lose him to a draft board. But now it was agreed that many a radio program was "tired" and ready for the discard. Only the difficulty of replacement during wartime had kept many of them on the schedules so long. Especially in the area of comedy it was widely felt that radio had its eggs in too few baskets. The eternal quest for personalities was resumed, the industry hopefully turned to the discharged GI's for hints of tomorrow's great ones.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### SUMMING UP AND LOOKING AHEAD

THE RADIO business was born, had its infancy, puberty and maturity all in a period of twenty years, 1920 to 1940. It shared a boom and survived a collapse. It was the product of a foolish and frantic decade of paper fortunes but it "found itself" during times of depression. Social scientists will be quarreling for a long time as to the role of radio in recent political events and in the influencing of public opinion before, during and after World War II. Meanwhile, in recapitulation, it is arresting to contrast radio set ownership with the size of the Presidential vote through the first two decades:

<i>Election</i>	<i>Radio Sets</i>	<i>Ballots Cast</i>
1920 . . . . .	Negligible	25,705,340
1924 . . . . .	3,000,000	29,022,260
1928 . . . . .	8,000,000	36,879,440
1932 . . . . .	18,000,000	39,816,522
1936 . . . . .	33,000,000	45,646,817
1940 . . . . .	40,000,000	49,815,312

These figures are, of course, not conclusive. They prove nothing. But they do suggest an interesting corollary between the growth and size of the radio audience and the growth and size (and interest) of the general public in political issues—and, of course, jobs.

The radio business is the product, in refinement, of the simple electrical signaling of the early nineteenth century just as the automobile business is the product, in refinement, of the same century's

constant experiments with combustion engines. Today the very fabric and design of everyday life is so profoundly influenced by radio (and by the automobile) that we can hardly imagine what life would be like without the new services which we take for granted. Other new industries based upon the inventive genius of this century and the last present a similar picture. Chemistry, aviation, moving pictures readily come to mind and, looking ahead, we imagine all sorts of changes to come from such further refinements of scientific know-how as are conjured up by the symbolic words atomic energy, radar, television, plastics, and so on.

Meanwhile, radio is of the modern world modern, of the social problems of our day social, of the merchandising techniques of mass production a prime technique. But the more one probes beneath the surface of radio success stories and sales figures, the more it becomes apparent that broadcasting is more—much more—than a business. By direct, and, I think, inescapable, deduction it appears that the function of radiobroadcasting in a polyglot and infinitely counterbalanced industrial society like the United States is so varied and demands of its entrepreneurs such social grasp and alertness that a radio businessman has to be, as a necessary condition of his own self-interest, prepared to prove that his thoughts can go and do go beyond the mere business routine of payroll, amortization, taxes and net profits.

Radio as it exists today in America plays an intimate role in family life and in the nation's politics, economy and education scheme which few, if any, of its founding fathers foresaw. In the nature of things this failure of clairvoyance was only logical. The world had never before encountered anything like radio. The consequences of cheap, instantly available, universally dispersed means for mass communication could hardly be imagined by people who had never lived under such facilities. Even now the penetration and potency of radiobroadcasting is forever being "discovered" by startled moderns who belatedly perceive, usually through some personal experience of their own, that radio can be astonishingly

compulsive to mass response. They cannot ignore the proof.

The radio business has, of course, its limitations and its disappointments as well as its triumphs. The shimmering success of the medium as such stands forth in bold relief but the uncertainties and the hazards of program building loom equally large. There is justified anxiety among businessmen as to the means of popularity and the steps necessary to beguile public fancy. Vast sums of money and the time of a considerable staff of persons can be, if ineptly expended, lost in an unanswering void of general public disinterest. This is true of the commercial and the noncommercial, the frivolous and the serious programs alike.

Not *whether* to use radio but *how* is the great contemporary question for showmen and advertisers, men of affairs and comedians, statesmen and dramatists. In radiobroadcasting as in many another new invention-created business, novelty was quickly displaced by criticism and dependable professionalism as distinct from eager amateurism became mandatory.

Telecommunications men in the nature of their own training and preoccupation often found it difficult or impossible to appreciate radiobroadcasting's essentially theatrical and emotional appeal. It was too abrupt a departure from their classic messenger-boy status. No disparagement of the accomplishments of the early pioneers is implied by this stress upon their very human inability to foresee the ultimate outlines of radiobroadcasting. They did anticipate the engineering fact of radiobroadcasting, but its social and economic utilization was at best but dimly suspected.

Not all the business houses which patronized radio remained as permanent customers. Some did not like their experiences. Some found the theatrical overtones of radio so unnerving that they preferred to pass by the benefits of the medium altogether. The businessman had all sorts of worries. For example there was the worry about whether the public really knew who the sponsor was. *Variety* had once published (1934) a disquieting "identification" report, which showed the following:

	<i>Sponsor Correctly Named</i>	<i>Sponsor Wrongly Named</i>	<i>Sponsor Not Known</i>	<i>Pct. Correct</i>
“Amos ‘n’ Andy” . . . . .	947	5	162	84.0
Eddie Cantor . . . . .	904	13	207	80.4
“Maxwell House Show Boat” .	891	5	223	79.6
Ed Wynn . . . . .	861	40	222	76.6
Rudy Vallee . . . . .	787	50	320	68.0
Myrt and Marge . . . . .	576	23	370	59.4
Wayne King Orchestra . . . .	601	12	511	53.4
Boake Carter . . . . .	378	3	372	50.1
“Rise of Goldbergs” . . . . .	470	6	539	46.3
Jack Benny . . . . .	462	24	584	43.2
Burns and Allen . . . . .	486	24	613	43.2
“Metropolitan Opera” . . . .	431	72	621	38.3
Bing Crosby . . . . .	353	48	640	33.9
Joe Penner . . . . .	351	29	657	33.8

A radio businessman has, of course, the customary consciousness of the cash drawer and he broods over payroll, balance sheet and net earnings just like any other businessman. Not public authority alone, however, but public opinion keeps radio tidy. Operation in the public interest, convenience and necessity must be policed, in the final reckoning, by the good taste and vigilant concern of the people.

Meanwhile it is apparent that American radiobroadcasting is the sort of business it is because of four dominant influences. These are respectively:

1. Private stations
2. Networks
3. Advertisers
4. Advertising agencies

The private station has been analyzed in these pages and an at-

tempt made to convey the infinite variety of its contacts with the community it serves. The differences in operation of the small town, the medium town and the big town were stated in explicit detail in Chapter Eight. The private station is the basis of all American broadcasting. Only a handful of stations are owned by noncommercial or nonprofit organizations. Between five hundred and six hundred of the local stations have contractual connections with, are member stations of, the four big coast-to-coast networks. The prevailing theory among the regulatory officials in Washington has favored a certain ambiguity in the statutes. Whatever the vagueness of the term "public interest, convenience and necessity" it has the virtue, in Washington eyes, of compelling constant wariness. Concerning one citizen's proposal that the amount of required "public interest" broadcasting be defined by law, say, one hour in the afternoon and one hour in the evening, it has been pointed out that any "mathematical" formula would contradict the very spirit of operation in the public interest. It is total operation and not piecemeal gesture that is wanted, and any plan to write into law an artificial standard might have the opposite effect to the one intended, making for less attention to public interest rather than more. The networks and the government seemed to have been together in opposition to this proposal which was primarily advocated by various groups of social critics including the American Civil Liberties Union.

The network is the vessel of national advertising and national advertising pays the freight of the big star and big comedian programs. To mix the metaphor the network and national advertising taken together are a cantilever arch from which swings the entire structure of broadcasting. Network and national advertising together create popularity and circulation, which means support for the local shows, prestige for the home town affiliated station, value and audience for station breaks, time signals and spot announcements.

It can of course be pointed out that many purely local radio sta-

tions in the United States operate successfully and profitably without a network tie, relying altogether on phonograph recordings and transcriptions for entertainment and surviving by spot announcements alone. This is true enough but it is still questionable that American radio could play the role it does as an advertising medium if high-powered and high-priced entertainment talent were not the audience-assuring fact of everyday existence which it is.

The advertiser meantime uses radio because it is effective and relatively cheap. Such companies as Lever Brothers, General Foods, Procter and Gamble, Colgate, American Tobacco, Wrigley's Gum, Ford, Chrysler, Liggett and Myers, R. J. Reynolds, Campbell Soup, Continental Baking, P. Lorillard, General Mills, Gulf, Texas, Lady Esther, Coca-Cola, Nash-Kelvinator, U. S. Rubber, Bayer's Aspirin, DuPont, Lehn and Fink, H. J. Heinz, Kellogg, Vicks Chemical, Philco, Sterling Products, Barbasol, International Silver, Brown and Williamson, represent a reflective and analytical acceptance of the medium.

A good many radio advertisers tend to be in the packaged-goods lines. Soaps are prominent, cigarettes well represented, canned soups, prepared package desserts, ready-cooked or half-cooked breakfast cereals stand out. The typical products of drugstore and grocery store are well advertised to the families of America. But actually almost any kind of commercial product or service has been or is ballyhooed by air. Beer accounts are fairly numerous and, in a city like St. Louis, radio programs of a fairly costly and pretentious production nature have been sponsored by half a dozen suds manufacturers all vying for the beer trade of this area. Insurance companies have utilized radio in considerable measure, finding it a valuable introduction to the home circle. Oil and gasoline users have included all the representative trade-marks in the field. Razor blade manufacturers have wooed the male, cosmeticians have wooed the female, ice cream companies the offspring, all via radio.

Floor wax, cigars, headache powders, prunes, salts, baked beans,

wines, coffees, mustards, ready-to-serve spaghetti, ginger ale, shampoo, stoves, greeting cards, trees and plants, old rags to be returned as glorious rugs, diamonds, canary food, dog food, lamps, hair slick, liniments, Bibles, cough drops, lawn mowers, train rides, typewriters, yeast cakes, and cod-liver oil—whatever merchants sell and American consumers purchase is advertised on large, moderate or experimental scale on national networks, regional networks or local stations.

To administer the advertising budgets, to buy time, write copy, build shows, supervise comics and authorize musical arrangements the advertising agency maintains a radio department comprising a variety of more or less inspired employees. The radio department in some agencies has come to overshadow all the rest and it is no exaggeration to state that certain advertising agencies, previously new or unimportant, came to fame and fortune as a result of their flair for radio programming. In the early years especially many an account changed agencies because of radio. The old agency had not kept up with the parade. The new alert competitor presented a plausible case for itself. Promised the services of advertising counsel who knew the latest techniques in merchandising, company management decided, on the basis of radio alone, to take a chance.

From the late thirties onward mounting production (i.e., talent) costs have disturbed but they have not as yet slowed down the industry. Programs still pay off. Meanwhile stars, actors, writers, directors, musicians, arrangers, royalties, prizes, transportation and other expenses add up to sizable sums. *Variety* reported the Abbott and Costello program costing \$10,000 a week for talent. "The Aldrich Family" stood the sponsor \$5,000 per broadcast. The Jack Benny revue was the most expensive radio show of all, \$22,500 every Sunday evening, and this did not include network time costs. Other program costs as estimated by *Variety* were as follows: "Dr. Christian," with Jean Hersholt, \$4,000; Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, \$2,500; Gracie Fields show with Harry Sosnik, \$7,000; Jimmy Fidler, Hollywood gossip, \$2,500; "Great Gildersleeve,"

\$4,000; Gabriel Heatter, news commentator, \$3,200; Bob Hope show, \$12,000; "Information Please" with Clifton Fadiman, Franklin P. Adams, John Kieran, \$10,000; "Lux Radio Theater," \$11,000; Bing Crosby show, \$10,000; Walter Winchell, personally among the highest in compensation, his earnings reportedly grossing above \$5,000 weekly.

In due course the radio industry had its war with ASCAP, its showdown with FCC, its rash of litigation. There were agitations against children's programs and against daytime serials. Advertising haters were especially piqued with radio for bringing copy right into the home. Operating costs were rising rapidly but so were revenues. Overhead was heavier than ever, unproductive outlays for television and shortwave operations were severe drains. Nonetheless, the total outlook was bullish.

Nothing that has happened to broadcasting during a quarter of a century of development has really been a true setback. The upward curve of money revenues slid off temporarily around 1933 and 1934, during the worst of the depression, but quickly recovered and resumed its upward course. This is not to suggest that broadcasters were not fully aware of the depression. They were. Competition was definitely acute and station management had to scurry about for income. A good many radio stations had a good many years of operation in the red. Nonetheless the over-all fact remains. The radio industry did well right through bad times. It kept increasing its aggregate advertising volume and it kept adding to its standing as a medium. This oversimplification is warranted: people in unaccustomed millions were spending unaccustomed hours in the bosom of their families in order to conserve spending money or because they had none to spend. Wanting diversion they turned to radio and the radio advertiser found himself speaking to an audience of a size and passivity not heretofore imaginable in advertising.

Nothing resembling settling down was ever possible to broadcasting. It wasn't, and it isn't, that kind of business. It is con-

tinuously being revised, expanded, extended, turned upside down. Consider, for example, the implications of the change-over from the current form of standard radio engineering, the so-called amplitude-modulation system, under which the industry was organized, to a new system of radio engineering known as frequency modulation. This is a fairly staggering trade task. Under F-M there will be, in the spectrum, considerably more room for new stations. As many as 4,000 may be possible (if the economics can be solved) and perhaps ten networks instead of the present four would be technically possible. Broadcasters will need to invest over a period of years sums estimated up to \$120,000,000 for F-M station equipment and antennas. The public in turn will have to invest at least two billions of dollars in new F-M sets (20,000,000 or more of them) before the switch-over will have been completed.

The height of a radio wave from its crest to trough is its amplitude. The distance from crest to crest or trough to trough is the wavelength. The number of waves passing by per second signifies frequency. The higher the frequency, the shorter the wavelength. Modulation is engineered at the transmitter where the carrier wave joins the wave of sound variations—i. e., words, notes, tones—which embody the living presence of personality.

Amplitude modulation, the *status quo* of radio, is a method of varying the carrier wave in relation to the crest or trough. One technical disadvantage is that it creates or travels a certain amount of extraneous noise called static. Under the newer system of frequency modulation static is practically eliminated and other qualitative improvements obtained. As its name implies, F-M regulates in terms of frequency (or how many waves) rather than in terms of amplitude (or how deep the waves) and through this technique is able to adjust to certain sound vibrations ordinarily outside the satisfactory capacity of the A-M type of engineering. Skeptics discount the tonal purity advantages on the ground that the limits of the human ear itself are far greater than any present insensitivity of radio. The corporal's guard of musicians with perfect pitch have,

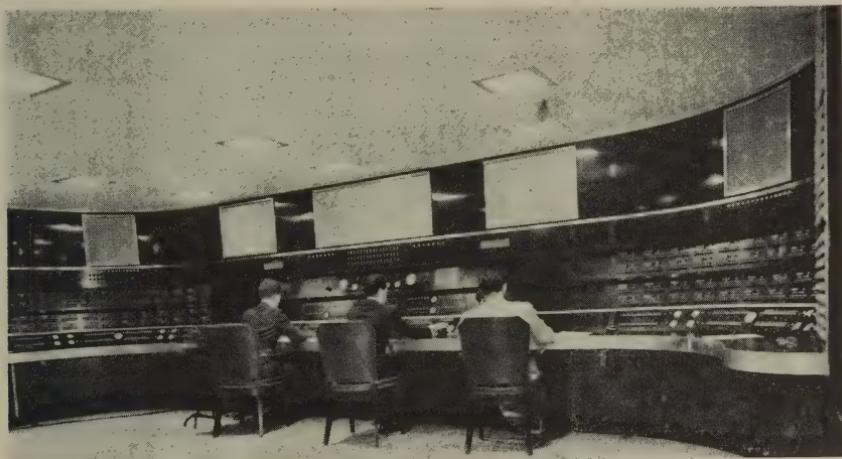
of course, long claimed that the radio we have known since the 1920's was a flawed instrument of tone transmission.

The advent of F-M engineering does seem likely, however, to improve radio technically as it may well modify and perhaps improve industry conditions generally. Among those who looked upon F-M as a retooling operation fundamentally it is doubted that the basic pattern of broadcasting in the United States will be altered. There will still be local radio stations, although perhaps many more, and there will still be networks, and probably some new ones, but the real problem will continue to concern the skilled manipulation of entertainment and advertising values. New competition and an inrush of new brains should enliven broadcasting practice.

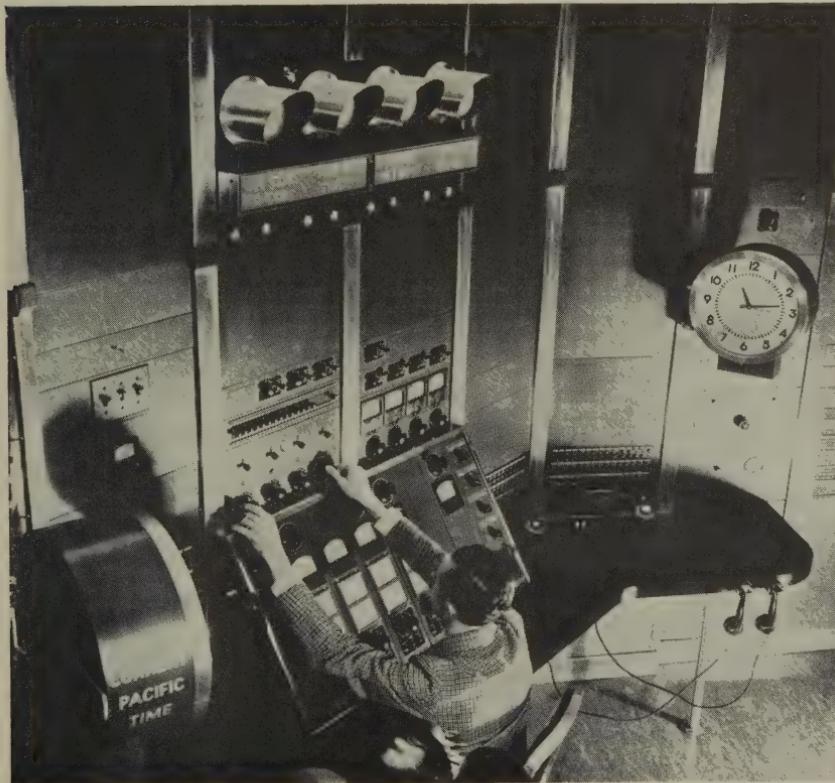
As Niles Trammell, president of NBC, expressed the matter:

After twenty-five years of sound broadcasting the industry faces a new and revolutionary era of technical advance that will demand the greatest utilization of resources, skills, operating experience and, I may say, pioneering courage.

Trammell recalled that it had taken six years of broadcasting under A-M before, late in 1926, the first network service could be established and he warned the nation that with F-M there would be no push-button wonders. F-M would have to be carefully planned and its economics and technicalities patiently solved. The main issue between broadcasters and regulators as regards F-M is the issue of separate or shared program service. Paul Kesten, executive vice-president of CBS, recalled that among engineers it had long been taken for granted that "except in certain rural areas, F-M was technically destined to replace A-M transmission as surely and inevitably as the tungsten lamp was destined to replace the old carbon filament," but he considered the problem "enormously complicated because it must be done against the background of a highly developed complex present broadcasting service which in the very act of changing over to new equipment, new coverage patterns, new



Master control panel at NBC



*Courtesy of KNX Hollywood*

Programs unite East-West



Antennae view of Manhattan

engineering . . . must not falter for an instant in its public service."

Kesten described the task that confronted broadcasters in these words:

We are about to tear up and replace all the roads over which millions of listeners travel at the flick of a switch, to reach their favorite radio programs—yet we must not for one hour interrupt the enormous flow of listening traffic which these highways carry.

Getting down to the moot question of program duplication Kesten declared:

The unnatural way of forcing additional program choice is to tell an A-M broadcaster operating an F-M station primarily in order to transfer his audience gradually to the F-M band, that he must provide a separate F-M program service and thus force him, in effect, to compete with himself. . . .

Separate programming service, far from creating equality of opportunity for present broadcasters and new entrepreneurs alike, would in fact create the reverse. That is, it would penalize present broadcasters heavily—and what is more important—it would penalize the public still more heavily.

History is tending to repeat itself as the broadcasters stand at the threshold of F-M. As was true twenty-five years before in the early 1920's there is the dilemma of financing program service. F-M is new, unproved. It will be years before it takes over from A-M. Meanwhile if the broadcasters are compelled by FCC order to provide a separate F-M program service instead of using, in duplication, their present A-M program service, the financial burden would be very considerable. "No sales argument for buying an F-M set can compare," it seems to Kesten, "with the argument that \$100,000,000 worth of American radio programs are yours with an F-M set. Not that the argument is phrased just that way in the set buyer's mind. To him, it means, 'If I spend \$50 for this F-M set I can get the 'Aldrich Family,' Kate Smith, Charlie McCarthy,

Bob Hope, the New York Philharmonic and all my other favorite programs—and I can get them better and clearer than I ever heard them before.' " Kesten was confident that identical programming of A-M and F-M would greatly shorten the transition period, perhaps to five years instead of ten years.

During World War II it was forbidden even to mention one form of telecommunication—radar. The very word was not to be used. This was a censorship absurdity since fairly detailed text books on the subject were freely available to any interested party in many a library around the country. But radar was top-drawer-secret stuff and security regulations completely blacked out even the smallest hint. In a matter of months after V-J Day stories began to circulate of the wonders of radar and these were climaxed in February of 1946 when the United States Signal Corps communicated by radar with the moon.

Only a little while before it had been casually reported in the press, and but little commented upon, that the "Radio Corporation of America and the Western Union Telegraph Company have jointly announced an important development in a microwave relay system." The old land-line telegraphy was being superseded by a new radio wave using "the same principle as radar." The new microwave relay stations would penetrate everywhere. No hamlet was so tiny as not to have direct telegraph service now. "There is no reason why fully half of our written communication should not be telegraphed from point to point." Letter-writing would indeed become a lost art.

And what of television? In a world in which the miraculous has become commonplace television's future is debated in terms of whether black-and-white television is good enough or whether the public should receive all at once high-definition ultra-frequency full-color transmissions on the supposition that anything less would bore a thrill-jaded people. Television exercises a unique fascination for many moderns who are often, to tell the truth, unexcited by either radio or moving pictures of which television is prospec-

tively the heir. Between the bulls and the bears in television prognostication one may choose according to taste since it is pretty much a matter of guesswork even with the most expert witnesses. The economics of television may be solved, but at the present writing nobody is sure how. Certainly there can be little argument that television program production is fantastically expensive. Television involves so many of the theatrical and film studio items of scenery and costume and make-up and elaborate preparation which radio altogether avoids. The memorizing of the spoken lines of dialogue alone represents an added difficulty of a major dimension. Perhaps the way around the entertainment-cost problem is the manufacture of films especially designed for television exhibition. That is the expectation of many but the skeptics refuse to become enthusiastic. Even a so-so "B" picture, they point out, costs \$300,000 to \$500,000. How can such television features be amortized? Where is the profit to come from?

Television may find techniques of its own. Probably the art will borrow from department-store window displays, from comic cartoons, from the futuristic scenery of the arty theaters. New, quicker, cheaper devices will be worked out. Camera tricks will come to the rescue. All this is partly speculative. Television made a lot of progress in black and white before the war, notably in London under the supervision of BBC's Gerald Cock and in America's various laboratories, CBS, DuMont, Philco, and RCA, to list them alphabetically.

College students dreaming ahead to their future business careers dwell much nowadays upon television and ask always how they may "get in on the ground floor." Even experienced men and women who have decided they don't fancy their present jobs or professions turn their thoughts to the new—as they think—"boom" and wish they might be part of it. There is a cult of enthusiasts, complete with officers, regular scheduled meetings, and bulletins, who will bear no hint that television is not both im-

minent and the greatest medium, bar none, ever devised by man. This cult is delirious with joy every time the trade press announces that the so-and-so advertising agency or film studio or theater chain has appointed what's-his-name to be "television director." Suffice that the whole matter of television is extraordinarily complicated not alone by the black-and-white versus color argument or the "Will radio or Hollywood run the show?" argument but by the uncertainties of public reception. A true convert will scorn this observation by pointing out that in the greater New York area where some thousands of television receivers have been working off and on for years the owners have developed a genuine passion for the medium, much in the manner of a balletomane who never tires of "The Dying Swan."

Television is assuredly a remarkable medium, despite any continuing hazards of eyestrain. It happens also to be a remarkably costly medium to service with programs and talent. Short cuts, substitute devices, ingenuity born of trial and error will perhaps establish certain economies. That remains to be seen. For the present the medium faces stupendous commercial obstacles.

Anyone familiar with a radio script or a film scenario will be shocked at the complete failure of a television shooting script to resemble either. The television script is a self-addressed memorandum from the director to the director. It clearly suggests that the director-writer will dominate television during the first developmental cycle and that studio and control-panel mechanics will overshadow story content altogether. These are problems that probably can be solved given a sufficiency of time and financial wherewithal to permit their solution.

Meanwhile television as it stands is indeed a modern miracle. Its commercial appeal in connection with big sporting and public events is undeniable and its ability even now to make a good show out of properly selected vaudeville acts cannot be questioned. One feels obliged, however, not to join the chorus of hallelujah-shouters,

for the difficulties still before television are greater by far than the accomplishments to date.

The vast open spaces of America must be borne in mind. Herein Great Britain has a distinct advantage, for a very few television transmitters might well provide the entire realm of England, Scotland and Wales with service, whereas in the United States full coverage would be quite something else. The British were distinctly ahead, program-wise, before the war and but for that disadvantage would perhaps be today. I saw enough in London to be convinced of this and many other observers would, I believe, concur.

As to jobs in television one feels justified in pointing out that in any new industry which has not yet unlocked the mysteries of its own profit formula wage scales are apt to be low, tenure uncertain and the whole prospect, in terms of career, excessively hard to predict. Often enough those who do the pioneering become exhausted and discredited and lost along the way. Certainly this has been true of all the earlier modes of telecommunications. None of these dyspeptic remarks will swerve the true believer in the slightest; they are set down not for the true believer's sake but for the sake of this reporter's conscience.

Still another possible by-product of the age of telecommunications is facsimile. This is a method for the transmission of documents, photographs, printed matter generally. The commercial prediction is of newspapers "printed" on an attachment to the home radio set. While the farmer sleeps his morning newspaper is being prepared by facsimile broadcasting out of, say, Chicago. Upon arising the farmer simply tears the radio-delivered journal off the roll. Fanciful? No more so than radar, television or radio itself.

What radio has done for advertising and politics and news dissemination and fine music it presumably can do for all education, more broadly considered. This is a matter of know-how and a

matter of good will. It is also somewhat a matter of attitude and courage. In the name of not offending any customer the advertiser may well tend to prefer the neutral and the timid alternative, and those who are impatient to use the medium for their own ends may thereby be provoked to scornful comments. Somewhere between the "hush-hush" policy of the ultra-conservative and the radical advocates of "blast" may lie the sound path of evolutionary development of the art of radio. Certainly the knowledgeable student of this fascinating business-and-more-than-business of radio will nod with understanding when FCC Commissioner Clifford Durr declares:

Never to offend anybody may be good salesmanship. But is it good radio? Is it good sense in times such as these in which we are living? The best in literature and drama, and even art and music, has offended. Milton offended in his time. So did Shakespeare and Victor Hugo and Voltaire and Molière and even Galileo in theirs—but their works have survived long after those whom they offended were forgotten.

Durr goes on: "Let us have a radio that is for listeners as well as for advertising accounts." Here, precisely, is the challenge of today and tomorrow in radio.

But it is necessary to remark that professional radiomen resent, and not without some justification, the habit of satire of all things radiogenetic which is typical of the modern intellectual. Certainly the educator and the superior citizen will have little influence in the betterment of radio—and that task goes incessantly forward—until and unless they descend from their platform of amused contempt. The educators, of course, especially on the secondary levels, have a reason germane to their own professional ideals for taking note of the greatest medium of their times for the dissemination of information and opinions. They learn in due course that radio is a means and not a guarantee and that the medium to be used at its maximum effectiveness calls for simple statements without

obscure and special vocabulary. But simple statement must never suggest that radio programs can be planned or managed simple-mindedly.

Radio is vast, gigantic, spread out, varied, many-sided, many-paced, stupendous, colossal and confusing. In the United States the volume of programming strains credulity. There are 65,000 fifteen-minute units of program service every day in the year.

Some years ago this writer found himself among a group of university professors discussing frequency-modulation radio and the possibility of creating an F-M station on the campus. In the heat of argument one ivory-tower and radio-hating professor shrilled, "I don't ever want to speak to more than seventy-five people at one time." This personal credo with its overtone of aristocratic disdain for numbers is by no means unique with this highly learned fine-arts professor who found the idea of radio popularization so odious he quite lost his urbanity. Many of his colleagues throughout America share his aversion. Radio is vaudeville. It is trivial. It is the market place. It concerns ordinary people and the things they think about. In short radio is educative in a practical and basic sense that disturbs those who prefer to think of education as one Ph.D. dazzling another Ph.D.

The importance of frequency modulation as and when it comes into general use in the next several years lies not only in the room provided in the radio spectrum for great numbers of new stations. Under F-M one station license will be more or less as technically desirable as another. There will not be under F-M the prince-and-pauper situation where certain stations have fine locations on the dial and powerful signals while others are hidden away in obscure corners.

But of course, the future frequency-modulation type of broadcasting and the present amplitude-modulation type have one thing in common—the program is the thing. It's not the original cost, but the upkeep; it's not the recognition of the importance of radio which is significant but the knowledge of its everyday application.

Educators entering radio or having the supervision of radio operations thrust upon them must acquire attitudes and skills appropriate to the medium.

Commercial radio has done the most, culturally speaking, for good music. Its record in this area is very strong. Surely radio is fairly entitled to a major share of credit for the upsurge of general interest in symphonic and operatic music in the last two decades. True, during the same twenty years we have also had boogiewoogie and jitterbugging, if it be argued that these are decadent forms of musical art.

Another much discussed kind of radio service is news. Here the question naturally arises—is it not of importance educationally that the American people are being jabbed and nudged and prodded by hundreds of newscasters and news analysts morning, noon and night into an awareness of public and international affairs?

Among educators and intelligentsia generally, there seems to be a division into two extreme points of view about radio. One group, the more numerous, dismisses radio as vulgar, trifling and unimportant and expects nothing from it. The other group has got religion and enthusiastically cries out, "Now that we have radio how can ignorance and bigotry and reaction survive?" Obviously the missing element in both points of view is common sense. Radio is a great medium of communication and education but radio is not divorced from, any more than a public school is divorced from, the politics of its time and the mores of its constituency. A free radio does not guarantee a democratic society but reflects it. Democracy may be enriched and quickened and served by radio but radio must be, in the first instance, protected by democracy. A country gets the kind of radio its ideology, rulers and nerves sanction.

A free radio needs and should enjoy the benefits of citizen criticism. But criticism is ineffectual if the critic fails to remember where and when he heard the program he is questioning. Criticism is respected and potent only when it is discriminating. Criti-

cism of radio is too often careless, undocumented and unfairly generalized. The innocent are bulked with the guilty. Programs are not heard just "on the radio" but on specific stations and networks and at given hours. Radio critics should know and say what they're talking about.

Obviously any educator who refrains from listening isn't going to influence broadcasters on the one hand or understand broadcasting on the other. One public superintendent of schools described in elaborate detail at a recent meeting the type of educational series he thought should be on the radio. Dr. Lyman Bryson, educational director of the Columbia Network, was obliged to stand up in meeting and reply, "But, sir, there is just such a program already on the air—and it has been for sixteen years. It is the 'American School of the Air,' five days a week."

Curiosity has been expressed in some circles as to the social significance, if any, of the commercial success achieved by intellectual diversions like "Information, Please" and "Quiz Kids." These programs presumably are popular for a very simple and obvious reason, namely, they are good fun. The public has not suddenly and mysteriously gone brainy. Rather the unusual has happened—an educational-type program has been planned to divert and not bore ordinary people. Robert Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, once said, "The trouble with educational radio programs is that they are no good." This has often been all too true but the success of a growing number of high-brow programs proves it need not be. The case in serious music is well documented. Opera, symphonies and virtuosos have all thrived on radio and the loyal audiences for such offerings are constantly enlarging. Columbia's "Invitation to Music" series may be cited as a case of giving the public a repertory of new, unusual, infinitely varied concert materials with no dilution or compromise and no fear of experiment. This is, musically, the same sort of series that the "Columbia Workshop" is dramatically—consciously intent upon being itself and heedless of consequences in the ordinary

sense of going after mass acceptance. The "Columbia Workshop" is an extreme in radio, of course, but a salubrious influence. It dares to present esoteric works like T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and the Old Vic Players of London in *Richard III* and *Peer Gynt*.

But we come back to the essential reality that radio is for the masses. It cannot pursue an effete policy in programming. It is not an educative medium by conventional definition but by abrasive action. The price of competition is advertising. Thus far the price of advertising has been a certain amount of abuse and excess. The cure for abuse and excess is presumably criticism, outcry and public opinion. It has usually been the cure all through history. The radio industry has come a long way in its first quarter of a century. The war has lately proved, if proof was needed, that it is a useful thing to a democracy to have so many trained technicians, so much accumulated know-how as America's four coast-to-coast networks and its 930-odd local stations possessed.

This seems true of many people's attitudes: they heap upon radio, as a thing apart, the accusations which are more properly leveled against Western civilization, human nature and nuclear fission. Radio is somehow judged by criteria that verge upon the superhuman. It becomes somehow intolerable that a radio businessman shares with businessmen generally an interest in profit. People who spend hours choosing the books and magazines they intend to read scorn to study the radio schedules to discover what might conceivably interest them. If they do not tune in at once upon something to their taste, or if by unhappy chance they tune in on the advertising copy, woe to radio.

There remains the question of the 1946 FCC report, the companion piece to the 1941 report and regulation, which were detailed in Chapter Sixteen. The aim of the subsequent extension of FCC controls, like that of the earlier move, is to spell out standards of good behavior. The industry which favors self-policing of program content sees such widening of government power as long

strides in the direction of program censorship. Broadcasters call it disingenuous to argue that there is no move toward censorship simply because a broad review of total schedule is the stated objective and the commission presumably asserts no control over the contents of any one individual broadcast. The first is the prelude to the last in their fears. Actually broadcasting has an innate confidence, business-wise, in its ability to survive and go on, for these regulations while disquieting and symbolic of a philosophy which they dislike are to be taken in stride. In its first quarter of a century of existence the broadcasting industry has soared against and despite innumerable obstacles, attacks and handicaps. There is, too, among broadcasters an intuitive feeling (which sometimes sounds smug and self-congratulatory when rendered in layman's language) that radio manages with remarkable fidelity to be a reasonable facsimile of the United States itself. Certainly radio programs form in themselves a panoramic view of the country. Here are America's ideas, ideals, prejudices, semantics, symbols, conscience, and heartbeats—the elements which justify our title's descriptive adjective, "fascinating."

Surely it would seem that the modern educator cannot remain indifferent to radio. It is too much a part of the environment of every growing child in the United States. It would seem logical for teachers to know about and care about radio, encouraging good programs and throwing their weight against bad programs. Intellectual snobs may achieve a sense of superiority by disdaining radio, and ivory-tower exquisites may insist upon addressing only small clusters of the elite up to a total of seventy-five. One suspects that the average teacher must become excited once he or she realizes that radio can be and has been an ally of the public schools in the constant fight against bigotry and fascism.

America possesses a great safety factor in having its radio controls so scattered, in having four national networks, thirty-five regional networks, 930 local stations. And with F-M there is the possibility of 3,000 or more new stations. Here, surely, is pluralism.

Where channels of communication, which means channels of propaganda, are concerned, one suspects there is a definite safety in numbers. The spreading of radio ownership comes at a time when fewer and fewer newspapers are being published.

Certainly every thoughtful citizen of a democracy must be concerned with the kind of organization that controls his radio. And it seems fair to say that under a system of many ownerships, all committed by law to balanced programming, a free traffic in ideas and opinions is much more probable. And it is worth remembering that until now the really serious abuse and misuse of the air have been by governments, not by advertisers.

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